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Contributions to the History of the Sanskrit Language

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CHAPTER EIGHT

THE SANSKRIT COSMOPOLIS, 300 - 1300: TRANSCULTURATION, VERNACULARIZATION, AND THE QUESTION OF IDEOLOGY

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I.

The 'Sanskrit Cosmopolis' is the name I want to suggest for what may be the most complicated—and as a totality least studied—transregional cultural formation in the premodern world. While 'cosmopolis' might imply a number of things to different readers, it is on the 'polis' or political dimension that I want to concentrate. For one defining feature of the Sanskrit cosmopolis is that Sanskrit became the premiere instrument of political expression in the polities that comprised it, those of most of South and much of Southeast Asia. In part because of its geographical and temporal magnitude, in part because it constitutes something of a historical anomaly, this cultural formation has never been historicized or theorized as a whole, and any attempt to do so is likely to disappoint specialists of the particular formations among which its study has always been parceled out; even the dates I have given for framing the limits of its origin and dissolution may be disputed. But disagreement is inevitable in trying to make sense of this complex, and perplexing, chapter in the history of language and political-cultural power.

A number of factors, discussed in what follows, make Sanskrit's cosmopolitan career remarkable. First, the historical career of Sanskrit: Only slowly and reluctantly, it appears, did Sanskrit emerge as a public political language—such as we can characterize this from inscriptions—from the sacerdotal environment in which it was most at home. It emerges dramatically as such a language in the polities of the subcontinent after the beginning of the common era, something that happens almost simultaneously in Southeast Asia, and in very similar ways,

especially with reference to Sanskrit's complicated contests with regional languages. In the end, for the most part by the fourteenth century, Sanskrit lost these contests, and lost them everywhere, but before that happened it was to be found as the paramount linguistic medium by which ruling elites expressed their power from Puruṣapura (Peshawar) in Gandhāra in the northwest of the subcontinent to as far east as Pāṇḍuraṅga in Annam (south Vietnam) and Prambanan in central Java. There are important holes in the cosmopolis—in Sri Lanka, for example, for all of its history, and in Burma for much, Sanskrit is not used to articulate political will—that are almost as hard to explain as the presence of the cosmopolis itself.

Second, the conditions of possibility for Sanskrit's diffusion as a language of politics: No organized political power such as the Roman imperium, or coherent, scripture-based religious idea-system such as Islam, was at work here. Sanskrit's spread was effected by traditional intellectuals and religious professionals, often following in the train of scattered groups of traders and adventurers, and carrying with them disparate and decidedly uncanonized texts of a wide variety of competing religious orders, Śaiva, Buddhist, Vaiṣṇava, and others. Third, its social domain: There is little to suggest—the very fact that we have to ask the question is counterevidence—that Sanskrit was an everyday medium of communication in South let alone Southeast Asia, or that ever functioned as a language-of-trade, a bridge-, link-, or koiné language or lingua franca (except among those traditional intellectuals) like other imperial or cosmopolitan languages such as Greek, Latin, Arabic, Persian, Chinese. Fourth, and related to this, its political work: We have little direct evidence that Sanskrit actually functioned as a language of practical imperium—the medium of chancellery communication or revenue accounting, for example—certainly not in Southeast Asia, almost certainly not in peninsular India or the Deccan (even for north India hard evidence is suspiciously scanty). What work then did Sanskrit do in much of the Sanskrit cosmopolis? One hypothesis I want to explore is that Sanskrit articulated politics not as material power—the power embodied in languages-of-state for purposes of boundary regulation or taxation, for example, for which so-called vernacular idioms typically remained the vehicle—but politics as aesthetic power. To some degree the Sanskrit 'cosmopolis' I shall describe consists precisely in this common aesthetics of political culture, a kind of poetry of politics.

The spread of Sanskrit in the first millennium as a strikingly homogeneous expressive mode of political power, helped create a new kind of vast zone of cultural interaction, what some might name an ecumene. Constituted by no imperial power or church but in large part by a communicative system and its political aesthetic, the Sanskrit ecumene is characterized by a transregionally shared set of assumptions about the basics of power, or at least about the ways in which power is reproduced at the level of representation in language, and Sanskrit's unique suitability for this task. For the thousand-year period between roughly 300 - 1300 C.E., in the repertory of cultural forms in the package of empire, Sanskrit becomes the key item.

What I want to do here, first, is to chart in concrete detail the historical route whereby Sanskrit achieved this status. For this I will look rather briefly at Sanskrit's emergence as a public language of politics around the beginning of the common era; then in greater detail at its diffusion in southern India; and, again briefly, at what happens in two specific domains in Southeast Asia, Khmer country up to the end of Angkor, and early Java. All this is only a preliminary sketch for a reconstruction of the internal political-cultural histories of the polities that make up the Sanskrit cosmopolis—the shared traits that are developed, the nature of its local inflections, and the very variable conditions for its dissolution—which I will not have the space to provide here. I want instead to think aloud about what is important in the Sanskrit cosmopolis for both cultural and political theory. These are the themes, all closely related, of my subtitle: transculturation, vernacularization, and ideology.

Let me characterize briefly what concerns me here, by formulating some research questions: (a) How did the transculturation process at work in the Sanskrit cosmopolis function, that is, what induced people to abandon local cultures, and eventually to re-assert them? Can comparative analysis with other processes of transculturation in antiquity (Romanization, for example) or modernity (American globalization) reveal anything about the specificities of the Sanskrit case? (b) Can we make any valid generalization about the relationships between Sanskrit and vernacular culture especially in terms of political language? What

significance should we attach to the later displacement of Sanskrit by vernacular political-cultural production? Can we usefully identify *domains of discourse*—for example, between the performative, 'workly', or expressive domain of language on the one hand, and constative, documentary, or contentual on the other[1]—to get a clearer sense of the work of Sanskrit in the Sanskrit cosmopolis? (c) Finally, can we theorize this process without risking mechanical functionalism and anachronism ('legitimation' being a causal explanation that illustrates both problems)? In a subset of this question I would include others: What role if any are we to attribute to the notion of ideology in its strong formulation (a discourse of false necessity that by systematic distortion naturalizes and reproduces relations of unequal power)? Are there not presuppositions—and unwarranted universalizations of our particulars—about power, conflict, agency, that we have already accepted when we look for 'ideological' effects? Doesn't any operational definition ("I shall take as ideology . . . ") produce immediate closure, inhibiting the production of new theory about society and culture from the empirical matrix? And surely new theorization is precisely what we would require to account for a premodern cultural formation of unprecedented character, and indeed, the reason why we bother to study it at all. This would be the case even if contemporary social theory were unanimous and coherent; it is *a fortiori* so given the disorder, even vacuum, that many have found at its core (e.g., Abercrombie et al. 1990:230).

Although my understanding of this whole complicated process compels me at present to bracket the explanatory role of ideology (in its strong acceptation) in the construction of the Sanskrit cosmopolis, my method points to a critique of the study of 'ideology' in its weak formulation as a history of the *idéal*, of ideas, representations, and arguments—of what texts have *said about* Sanskrit. For my part I want instead to try to capture *practices*, and then ask what sort of social explanation—discourse of power or whatever—may account for these practices. In the past I have always tried to acknowledge what I would call the reality of the normative and the normativity of the 'actual', that is, to acknowledge not only that the actual has theoretical and normative

[1] The dichotomies are those of Heidegger, Austin, and Lotman respectively, though I may not always use them in the senses they intended.

consequences, but that the *idéal*, the normative, the theoretical, has actual consequences (for example, the traditionalization of reality, the turning of texts into reals).[2] But I think Indology has too often neglected practice, especially social practice, however limited our ability to recover it may be. Sanskritists have what historians call 'bad data'—except of course for inscriptions and literary texts, where we are among the richest in the world—and it is instructive to reflect on what, in the historical reality of Sanskrit as a practice, can account for such impoverished data. My hypothesis about the work of Sanskrit in the Sanskrit cosmopolis offers some suggestions. At all events, neglect of practices is problematic on epistemological grounds, too. For in the end, what the *idéal*, or even ideology, really *means*—since meaning is always historical—lies in what people *have done* with it, and therefore not in their shared beliefs so much as in the forms in which life is organized (Giddens 1981:68).

II.

When and how—from what earlier location, and under what circumstances—does Sanskrit enter the domain of 'public' political discourse in South Asia? To be sure, the answer to this question depends to some extent on our understanding of its terms. There may be an association of great antiquity between kingly power and Sanskrit in South Asia, though the earliest materials (from the vedic *saṁhitās* and *brāhmaṇas*) come to us in what has long been constituted as a liturgical corpus and is accordingly hard to dissociate from that context; whereas the 'epic' materials, whose political imagination I have always sought to foreground, are, precisely, imaginary. The term 'public' gestures toward the question of writing, and thus the third century B.C.E. forms something of a historiographical limit for my inquiry. 'Sanskrit' is another term not without potential ambiguity. But I will not here address the idea of 'vernacular Sanskrits' or even such phenomenon as so-called Epigraphical Hybrid Sanskrit, which may be thought to throw into

[2] A useful distinction between traditional and traditionalistic is made by Brian Stock (1990:38): "Traditional action is substantive. It consists of the habitual pursuit of inherited forms of conduct"—Bourdieu's *doxa*—"which are taken to be society's norm. Traditionalistic action, by contrast, is the self-conscious affirmation of traditional norms"—my *realization* of texts.

question what we really mean by the name (Salomon 1989; Damsteegt 1978). Even given long pre-existent relations of Sanskrit and political power, the potentially deceptive shadow cast by the rise of writing, or the range of linguistic phenomena that may find inclusion under the name 'Sanskrit', I think we can locate an important break in the history of Sanskrit and public political expression—just as there will be an important break in the history of regional languages and public political expression, marking the end of the cosmopolis—where the sociality of Sanskrit seems to change radically, and where the writing of texts in standard Sanskrit (a category wholly intelligible and 'emic' in early South Asia) becomes obligatory in the public expression of royal power.

The crucial period is of course the interval between the two great imperial formations, the Maurya and the Gupta, when some of the key innovations occurred in the domain of language practices that were to mark the entire following millennium. This is illustrated in the well-known developments in two of the principal formations occupying this interval, the Sātavāhanas and the Kṣatrapas.

The Sātavāhanas took control of a major part of peninsular South India, and some parts of Central India, in the period following the collapse of Maurya hegemony. Their rule lasted from the last quarter of the third century B.C.E. to about the middle of the third century C.E. From the multitude of inscriptional and numismatic evidence available to us now (Mirashi 1981), something very striking emerges: Although this was a decidedly *vaidika* dynasty, as evidenced both by their continual performance of *śrauta* rites and by explicit self-identification (e.g., *ekabahmaṇa*, Mirashi 1981:13, 35), there is no evidence for their use of Sanskrit in any non-liturgical context; I do not know of a single literary work in Sanskrit associated with the court, or indeed, found in the entire space-time world of the Sātavāhanas—nearly half a millennium and most of Deccan and much of peninsular India.[3] Everything we know

[3] The presence at this court, near its end, of the grammarian Śarvavarman, however legendary, is instructive: his *Kātantra*, the first post-Paninian grammar (after the Buddhist Kumāralāta), eliminates all *vaidika* rules from the grammatical system, and thus may be thought to prepare the way for the expansion of a desacralized use of the language that I suggest was in the offing. I discuss below the one Sanskrit text produced in the Sātavāhana world, the *Yugapurāṇa*.

about the Sātavāhana dynasty and their world seems to suggest that Sanskrit was avoided—apparently rigorously avoided—outside liturgical, and their related scholastic, contexts.

Whether or not such avoidance pertains to the entire South Asian world before this period (though I believe one can argue it largely does) ultimately has little historiographical bearing on the discontinuity that marks the start of the Sanskrit cosmopolis. For the fact is—let me repeat it, though it is long familiar—that political inscriptions, that is, public texts in standard Sanskrit and expressing royal power, explode into prominence from the third-fourth century on, whereas not a single example is found anywhere in India before the second century C.E., or some three to four hundred years since public writing makes its appearance in the subcontinent. Indeed, there are no Sanskrit inscriptions at all anywhere, from Peshwar to Tamil Nadu, except for a few exiguous (generally two-line) records commemorating liturgical, *vaidika* or quasi-*vaidika*, rites: the founding of a temple enclosure (EI 16:27, ca. 50 B.C.E.), say, or the establishment of a sacrificial post memorial (*yūpa*) (ASI A/R 1910-11:40ff.; perhaps early first century C.E.). This holds equally well for the decidedly 'brahmanical' dynasty that had succeeded the Mauryas to the north, the Śuṅgas, of whom we have, so far as I can see, only one late inscription in Sanskrit (the Ayodhyā stone inscription of the *dviraśvamedhayājin* Dhanadeva, which commemorates the construction of a tomb, first century C.E.; EI 20:57). An additional important body of hard evidence indicating language practices outside such *vaidika* contexts mentioned above are the so-called hero-stones (in Kannada *vīragals*; *pāḷios* in the north), which celebrate local heroes fallen in a cattle raid, defense of a village, and the like (Settar and Sontheimer 1982). So far as I can tell, few are written in Sanskrit—so few in fact that in the mass of regional-language examples they constitute a statistical zero.[4]

The first public political text in Sanskrit of importance is indubitably the celebrated inscription of the Kṣatrapa king, Rudradāman.[5] The text

[4] Two instances are the well-known stone pillar inscription of the time of Bhānugupta (510 C.E.), which resembles a hero-stone, and a sixth-century *satī* stone (*Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute* 9 [1948]).

[5] To judge from Sātavāhana records there may have been something of a tradition of composing such *gadyakāvya praśastis* in Prakrit (Sircar 1965-83:Vol. 1:203-5), but this is rare.

of this inscription has been known for more than a century and a half, from the time James Prinsep first published it in 1838. What I want to highlight, however, is the fact that in all the hundred and fifty years since Prinsep—a period that has witnessed an intensive hunt for inscriptions throughout South Asia, issuing in forty-two volumes of *Epigraphia Indica*, eight volumes of *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, and countless other reports of inscriptional finds from archaeological investigations around the subcontinent—nothing has been discovered to diminish the cultural-historical significance of the Kṣatrapa break.

An additional hint about Kṣatrapa innovation and Sātavāhana traditionalism may be offered by a contemporary brahmanical text, the Yugapurāṇa. The only work to refer "in any detail to the Indo-Scythian incursions" according to John Mitchiner (1986), in his new (and imperfect) 'critical' edition, the Yugapurāṇa was likely to have been composed in Ujjain not much after the arrival of the Śakas, ca. 25 B.C.E. For the author of this Sanskrit text issuing from the cultural sphere of the Sātavāhanas, the conflict with the Śakas brings about the apocalyptic *yugānta* (this text provides in fact the first account of the *yuga* theory): For "all four social orders will adopt the same behavior ...and outcastes will perform Vedic sacrifice with holy mantras" (vss. 50 and 53).[6] Only those regions will survive that are *dharmapriya*, namely, the regions of the Sātavāhana empire. This text is composed, uncharacteristically for the Sātavāhanas, in Sanskrit because, I would suggest, it has or seeks vedic-purāṇic authority. For most other textual production at this period—to repeat the striking paradox—the brahmanical Sātavāhanas insistently employed Prakrit for their public records, while their adversaries, the outsider Śakas, had begun to use Sanskrit.[7]

Now, although I am concentrating here on public political texts in Sanskrit, the transformation to which I am pointing manifests itself profoundly in other dimensions of imperial culture. The most important of these for me—to which I will return in this paper—is the development of what around this time came to be termed *kāvya*. Others be-

As for verse inscriptions, none exists in Prakrit, or, as we shall see, in any of the regional languages for many centuries.

[6] Verse 53: *tretāgniṁ vṛṣalā loke hoṣyanti laghuvikriyāḥ / oṁkāraprathitair mantraiḥ yugānte samupasthite ||*

[7] Cf. Mirashi 1981:66: "The Sātavāhanas were themselves followers of the Vedic religion. They performed several Vedic sacrifices, but they got their description [sic] incised not in Sanskrit but in Prakrit. All their other inscriptions also are in Prakrit. On the other hand, most of the inscriptions of the Śakas are composed in fairly correct Sanskrit . . . This contrast in the attitudes of the indigenous Hindus and the foreign Śakas is certainly noteworthy."

fore me have directly linked to the great political-cultural transformation at the beginning of the common era the actual origins of *kāvya*, and though I would not go so far, I do not think their arguments have been fully answered yet (Lévi 1904; Sircar 1939).[8] Like the vedic prehistory of Sanskrit and kingly power, there is a long prehistory to classical *kāvya*. Indeed, it derives a measure of its very power from its echoes of this prehistory. But the existence of what the next thousand years of cultural tradition will identify as *kāvya* is exceedingly difficult to demonstrate for much before this period. A stray reference in Pāṇini, a few citations in Patañjali (who never uses the term itself) prove precious little, even if we could securely date these references; the total absence of any *kāvya* texts (or memory of such texts) itself is rather more instructive. And in fact Sanskrit tradition itself has recorded its awareness that newness had entered the world somewhere in this period: Aśvaghoṣa, the Buddhist poet of the second century, like all subsequent ethnohistorical accounts of Sanskrit literary history (Pollock 1995), famously awards this novelty to Vālmīki (*vālmīkir ādau ca sasarja padyam*, "Vālmīki created the first verse-poem," *Buddhacarita* 1.43, echoing of course the poem itself), and everything in the monumental text of Vālmīki's work resists dating much before the common era.[9] For the moment, however, my main concern is with the less contested evidence of the epigraphical record, whose political-cultural significance I want to interpret somewhat differently from earlier scholars.

The appropriation of Sanskrit for public political purposes at the end of the first century C.E., is an event symptomatic or causative of a radical transformation of the historical sociology of Sanskrit, comparable, and no doubt related, to the Buddhist appropriation of Sanskrit—and what Brough called a "quite definite translation in Sanskrit" of much of the 'canon' (1954:362, 367)—after half a millennium of rejection. In this process newly settled immigrants from the northwest seem to par-

[8] Inscriptional evidence published since these essays only tends to confirm their view. The earliest securely datable evidence of Sanskrit *kāvya* is from the time of Śoḍāsa, son of Rājūvula, the Kuṣāṇa king ruling in Mathurā ca. 50 B.C.E., the Mora step-well inscription (EI 24:195ff.). The second earliest metrical inscription in Sanskrit of which I am aware is found at the end of the Khānākherā stone inscription of Śrīdharavarman (ca. 279 C.E.), who by the way describes himself as a Śaka appointed as *mahādaṇḍanāyaka* (EI 16:230ff.).

[9] I elaborate on these questions for Sanskrit, and think about the proposition "literature begins" more broadly in Pollock forthcoming.

ticipate centrally. Years ago Louis Renou may have been right to argue that "les souverains étrangers ont consacré la vogue du sanskrit littéraire plutôt qu'ils ne l'ont suscitée" (Renou 1947a:244); more recently, Gérard Fussman urges us to avoid any mechanistic model and to view the factor of political change as mere concomittance (and "concomittance n'est pas causalité," 1980b:425). Yet the synchrony of the two events is striking, and others may be right to locate in them an "innovating force."[10] What is historically important is not so much that newcomers from Iran and central Asia should begin to participate in the prestige economy of Sanskrit—other groups had long sought and found incorporation in Indian cultural communities—but rather that Śakas, Kuśānas and the Buddhist poets and intellectuals they patronized begin to turn Sanskrit into an instrument of polity and the mastery of Sanskrit into a source of personal charisma.[11]

There seems to be something new here, and we must try to understand what it is. When Fussman, for example, remarks on "le prestige que la civilisation indienne du Madhyadeśa a pu avoir chez les chefs de tribu du Swāt" (1980a:9), we might be inclined to assume that these tribal chiefs just pick up Indian civilization as if it were lying there already full-formed. What the epigraphic record (thin though it admittedly is) suggests happened instead is that they help *create* this civiliza-

[10] Damsteegt 1989:306. It is odd that his argument is not carried further, and in fact is relegated to a footnote. Here as in his monograph (1978) a certain muddle remains. He rightly points out that in Mathurā, as elsewhere, "the inscriptions of the pre-Kṣatrapa age [which includes 'Hindu', that is, 'Brahmanic', inscriptions] are all composed in MIA"; "Sanskritization appears only after the arrival of the Kṣatrapas." He then goes on to say, on the same page, that the turn to Sanskrit "is due, not to the fact that [some EHS] records are connected with the court, but to the fact that they are under the influence of Brahmanic culture" (p. 302). The question that remains central is how and why for the first time a publicly inscribed Sanskrit unconnected with liturgical purposes comes into being.

[11] Rudradāman celebrates his own proficiency in all the brahmanical *vidyā*s, sciences, including grammar itself (see below, p. 236). At the same time—and this is contradictory—these Western Kṣatrapas seem not to have been highly brahmanized: they appear not to have adopted a gotra affiliation for another century, there is no indication of special patronage of brahmans, and their administration seems largely to have relied on non-brahmans, Pahlavas, Ābhiras, etc. (Pingree 1978:4). The Sanskritizing tendency of the Śakas seems to be evident from their earliest documents. Fussman has noted how Sanskrit has 'infiltrated' the middle-Indic of their early records, and remarks on their "learned or pretentious borrowings" from Sanskrit (1980a:9).

tion by employing Sanskrit in a hitherto unprecedented way. They make political poetry in a language that had not been used that way before—for the publicly inscribed celebration of a historical ruler—and that from that point on for a thousand years will be made only in that language. We may thus wish to rethink the received account that imagines a "*resurgence* of Brahmanism" leading to a "*re*-assertion of Sanskrit" as the language of literature and administration after the Maurya period (Norman 1988:17-18, italics added; cf. Kulke & Rothermund 1990:85), and consider instead the possibility that a new cultural formation, a Sanskrit cosmopolitan formation, was on the point of being invented.

Whatever the cogency of my account of the origins of the Sanskrit cosmopolis—the quest for origins always has something chimerical about it—its subsequent history can be traced with reasonable exactitude. After the Kṣatrapa/Kuśāna innovations and the creation or confirmation of Sanskrit as the paramount instrument of political expression, Prakrit will forever be banished from the realm of public political poetry, throughout the subcontinent and beyond. The last sign of Prakrit used in inscriptions in the North, apart from the Kharosthi documents from Central Asia (where Prakrit is found well into the fourth century) and the mere engraving of Prakrit poetry (which enjoyed, for example, a brief fashion in Bhoja's Dhārā), is in the hybrid Kuśāna records; there is nothing at all in the North after about 320 C.E. In the upper Deccan, the last Prakrit inscription of the Vākāṭakas, who ruled over what is now eastern Maharashtra and southern Madhya Pradesh, is found in the Bāsim plates of Vindhyaśakti II, ca. 355 C.E. (CII 5:vi.), the earliest of the Vākāṭaka copper-plate grants. In fact, it is the only Prakrit record of this dynasty that has been found, though given the nature of the literary production of members of this family—Pravarasena II (Setubandha, ca. 400), Sarvasena of the Vatsagulma branch of the line (the lost Harivijaya, ca. 330 C.E.),[12] and others whose works are included in the Māhārāṣṭrī anthology Gāhāsattasaī (Mirashi CII 5:lvii)—there is every reason to suppose that their earlier records were in Prakrit.

[12] The fragments preserved by Bhoja have recently been edited in Kulkarni 1991.

The Bāsim plates themselves are an instructive finale to this historical transformation in the Upper Deccan, and are an early instance of a defining feature of the newly created Sanskrit cosmopolis that we shall encounter repeatedly throughout southern India and Southeast Asia: the cultural division of labor between Sanskrit and regional languages, for which, though 'diglossia' may be (marginally) appropriate in the case of Prakrit, I would suggest the term *hyperglossia*.[13]

> 'Diglossia' conventionally points to the prevalence of split norms, with restricted mutual intelligibility, between literary and colloquial usage in a *single* language; modern Tamil and Bengali are often cited as examples (cf. Shapiro and Schiffman 1983: 164, though they provide no census of features taken to constitute *a language*); the Prakrits were viewed as different *bhāṣā*s, and grammaticalized as such, from at least some centuries after the common era. That term, as well as 'bilingualism', is inadequate for capturing the extreme compartmentalization of usage—and the fact that it is society-wide—let alone difference in cultural opportunity, which are in evidence in the case of Sanskrit and such regional languages as I consider here (Kannada, Khmer, Javanese). This difference lies not merely in internal split (di-) but extreme superposition (hyper-) of different languages. The tension between, say, Sanskrit and Kannada, in the face of this superposition marks the entire history of the latter.

In the Bāsim plates the genealogical portion (if not quite yet a *praśasti* yet still rhetorical) is written in Sanskrit, the 'business' portion, concerning a grant of land to (n.b.) brahmans, is in Prakrit, the record ending with a benedictory phrase in Sanskrit (*siddhir astu*). The record shows clearly that Prakrit and Sanskrit could (and perhaps always did) inhabit the same cultural space before the complete victory of the latter. The prominence of Prakrit in inscriptional discourse, accordingly, does not represent some sort of ignorance of Sanskrit, a common confusion,[14] nor even, I think, a mere rejection of Sanskrit, on the assumption

[13] The earliest instance of this division in the realm of Prakrit is the Mora step-well inscription (see note 8). This opens with the documentary or dating portion of the record in Prakrit, followed by a passage in Sanskrit poetry commemorating the construction of a *śailam . . . grham* of the *vṛṣṇīnāṁ pañcavīrāṇām*. Other more or less contemporaneous documents found at the same site, including identifications of images of the gods, are in quasi-Prakrit (EI 24:201, 204, 205). (Incidentally and by contrast, those inscriptions in the same place that are associated with the Śakas are quite evidently in Sanskrit, EI 24:206, 207.)

[14] Cf. for example Mirashi (1981:177) on the Sātavāhanas: "Even if we grant that the rules of the Dharmasūtras were observed in practical life and the members of the three higher castes lived with their gurus and studied the Vedas for some time, their knowledge of Sanskrit must have been very meager" (though for some reason he thinks the description of Sātakarni by Gautamī Balaśrī was "first written in Sanskrit and then converted into Prakrit," 178). Sircar argued that Prakrit hybrids as we find them in epigraphy are evidence of an "intermediate stage in the popularity of Sanskrit and the decline of Prakrit" (1965-83: Vol. 1:430 n. 2), as if a half-realized Sanskrit were somehow a half-popular Sanskrit.

that there was some invariable correlation between Prakrit and Buddhism and Sanskrit and Brahmanism.[15] The two idioms simply had, from far earlier on, very separate discursive spheres, which, as this Vākāṭaka record shows, had begun to intersect in new ways by the early fourth century.

Whereas Prakrit continues here to execute documentary functions, Sanskrit has emerged from its sacral domain with a very different kind of public work to do. In a real sense, of course, given the nature of these public uses, one could well argue that Sanskrit never did emerge from the domain of the liturgical, but rather extended that domain, since wherever a choice of codes was available it was the public function of Sanskrit to articulate the non-quotidian, the expressive, the 'literary' (by which, however, I in no way mean something discursively irrelevant; see below, p. 239 and n. 48), and not the documentary. As we shall see, Sanskrit comes to monopolize all such 'workly' and ideational functions of inscriptional, and by extension literary, discourse, and reduces regional languages—Tamil, Kannada, Khmer, and old Javanese, to name only those I will discuss—to an apparently subaltern status and function in the poetry of polity.

III.

An exemplary case of the institution of a Sanskrit political-cultural idiom is offered in the epigraphical record of the Pallava dynasty. Here we can follow in a detailed and continuous fashion the long-term developments of language and royal power in a multilingual environment. These are the earliest epigraphically attested rulers to hold sway over the northern regions of Tamil Nadu from their base in the ancient

[15] This has the status of an *idée reçu*; for one statement see Sircar in EI 34:197-98 (though here he is speaking specifically of Nagarjunakonda). Contrast the evidence from the Pallava and Ikṣvāku materials I cite in what follows. And this is to say nothing of Southeast Asia, where, while in Śrīvijaya the earliest inscription is in Old Malay and Buddhist (JASB 1935:61), Buddhist inscriptions in Sanskrit are found in Cambodia (e.g., Vat Prey Vier 664 C.E.)

city of Kāñcī. The dynasty issued charters from about 300 C.E. until 950 C.E., their dominions being largely absorbed by Coḷa Āditya I around 910-15 C.E. Their inscriptions have recently been collected in chronological order by the late T.V. Mahalingam (1988).[16]

The very first record is a stone inscription of Siṁhavarman (I) from the end of the third century C.E. (= EI 32:87-90). It is in Prakrit, if a somewhat unusual form of Prakrit ("in no way absolutely pure Prakrit," as Pischel put it, showing phonological preservations of Sanskrit forms and certain other "gross irregularities against Prakrit" [1981:9]). There is no *praśasti* portion, but only a brief identification of the king. The document records a *dakṣiṇa* to one [Jīvasi]vasami for his performance of *santisathiyāyaṇa* (*śāntisvastyāyaṇa*) rites. The second record (= EI 6:84-8) is about a decade later. This time a copper-plate,[17] but again in Prakrit and without any *praśasti* portion, it was issued by the *yuvamahārājo bhāradāyasagotto palavāṇaṁ sivakhaṁdavammo,* in assigning a *bramadeya.* It is striking, however, that the legend on the seal is in a somewhat different alphabet from that of the grant itself, and renders the name of the king in the Sanskrit form *śivaska* [*ndavarmmaṇaḥ*?] in contrast to the *sivakhaṁdavammo* of the plate itself. Around 338 C.E. the third extant Pallava record, a land-grant on copper-plates (= EI 1.1), was issued by the *aggiṭṭhomavājapeyasa*-[sic]*medhayājī* king, *sivakhaṁdavamo,* still in Prakrit and still lacking anything resembling a *praśasti.* Again the seal of these plates bears the

[16] Additional Pallava inscriptions have been discovered since Mahalingam's work was completed about 1977. These are promised in a supplement volume. There is a rather large number of inaccuracies in the work, though it is not always clear whether these are simple reproductions of inaccuracies in the records themselves or new ones introduced here.

[17] There are notable linguistic and discursive implications of material form of early Indian epigraphs. Copper-plate grants (a fashion that seems to be invented no earlier than the third century C.E.) were issued from the centers of royal power, and reflected linguistic and discursive interests and decisions of such power; and they were composed by intellectuals attached to the court (and sometimes actually signed by the king himself). Stone inscriptions, by contrast (from the third century B.C.E. on) were sometimes composed by individuals absent from the court, and did not always therefore reflect its linguistic and discursive interests. These implications of material form tend to diminish in later periods; and of course there are numerous exceptions from the earliest period. See also Ramesh 1984:xx n. 1.

name of the king in Sanskrit: *śivaskanda* [*varmaṇaḥ*] [18]; in Sanskrit, too, is the benediction at the end: *svasti gobr*[*ā*]*h*[*m*]*aṇalekhakavācaka-śroṭṛbhya iti.* All this, to my mind, lends additional weight to what is suggested by the peculiar Prakrit of these early grants, and what I argued above: an insistence on avoiding Sanskrit in the documentary *laukika* mode, however imperfectly such avoidance is done at the linguistic level, however brahmanical the context (the gift of a *dakṣiṇa, brahmadeya,* and the like), however *vaidika* the grantor (*aggiṭṭhomavājapeyassamedhayājī,* etc.).

By the fourth generation after Śivaskandavarman (ca. 330-350 C.E.), however, the inscriptional style of the Pallavas changes dramatically and permanently. Records from the reign of Vijayaskandavarman (ca. 400-436 C.E.) and after are in textbook Sanskrit, and from the beginning show the elements of what, at that moment, is in the process of becoming the standard *praśasti* style: the fixing of genealogical succession, the catalogue of kingly traits of the dynasty, the eulogy of the ruling lord, following which is the documentary account of the gift that the record inscribes, and its conditions and imprecations against violating them. (A number of these elements seem to appear first in the records of the Kadambas, but the epigraphical remains of this dynasty are too scanty to permit inferences about borrowing.). Typical is the following record of Vijayaskandavarman (III), where what I would identify as the interpretative or expressive function of the *praśasti,* to which I will often return, begins to grow clear (Mahalingam No. 5 = EI 15:249-252):

> The genealogy is traced back to the fourth generation (as expected, in view of *śrāddha* ritual); the great grandfather or dynast is credited with performing the *aśvamedha* sacrifice; the grandfather is praised for his command of the three kingly powers (*utsāhaprabhu śaktisampannasya*) and for his "seizing kingship by his own heroic effort" (*svavīryādhigatarājyasya*) [*pace* Mahalingam 1988:35]; his father has won glory in countless battles and subjected the circle of kings to his will. Vijayaskandavarman himself is described as "a man of character adorned with suitable conduct, a man true to his word,

[18] This is also the case in an apparently contemporaneous charter of one Jayavarman (Kistna district, Tamil Nadu). The grant itself is in Prakrit, whereas the seal reads *bṛhat-phalāyanasagotrasya mahārājaśrījayavarmmaṇaḥ* (Within the grant, too, the name of the gotra, and the name Maheśvara, are in Sanskrit, lines 3-4). The Sanskrit is also written in a different set of characters from the Prakrit. EI 6:315-319.

whose stores of merit increase daily by reason of his gifts of cows, gold, land; a man who rejoices in obedience to gods and brahmans, who has determined the true meanings of all the *śāstras*." The *praśasti* is followed by the details of a gift of a village to a brahman, and the standard imprecations against infringement on the gift.

The Pallava public text, for prose *praśastis* at least, attains its final form by this point: a *gadyakāvya*-style genealogy, followed by the grant specifics, followed by the imprecations and date. All that will be added later are introductory invocations of the gods (*maṅgalācaraṇas*) in verse. These do not appear in the Pallava records until the reign of Siṁhavarman III, ca. mid-sixth century, in a copper-plate "*praśasti* composed by Medhāvin, who is skilled in all *śāstras*, wise as Bṛhaspati" (vs. 9).[19] Simultaneously with the first appearance of the metrical *praśasti* comes the first appearance in Pallava records of Tamil. Here we find again the division of linguistic labor mentioned earlier, and to which I shall return in greater detail later in the paper: Sanskrit is henceforth used to interpret, supplement, reveal reality; whereas for documenting reality, so to speak, in the pragmatic portions of the grant, non-Sanskrit is, with increasing necessity, required.

After an invocation to Jinendra, Munīndra, Devendra, the genealogy of the Pallavas begins, starting with Brahmā. Siṁhavarman is born among the Pallava kings, "those whose lotus feet are awakened by the light of the sun-like jewels on the heads of rival kings." Then comes Siṁhaviṣṇu, "who could defeat the Lion[-form] of Viṣṇu [*jitasiṁhaviṣṇuḥ*], or by his power conquer Indra with his bow [*balena jiṣṇur dhanuṣāpi jiṣṇum*], who ornamented his brilliant clan [*bhrājiṣṇuvaṁśaṁ svam alaṁkariṣṇuḥ*] and could destroy the bold in battle [*nirākariṣṇus samareṣu dhṛṣṇūn*]. Did he not have all the *kṣātra* virtues—truthfulness, generosity [or: non-abandoning of truth], discipline—such as no other possessed, he who took the land of the Coḷas, she who wore a veil of palmtree groves, and a belt jingling [. . . ?]. It was he who gave the village of Śramaṇāśrama to the ascetic Vajranandi, a man filled with countless eminent virtues," who was devoted to the worship of Jinendra, Jainendra, Munīndra. Then follows the Tamil portion of the grant: King Siṁhaviṣṇu communicates an order to the nāṭṭār of the Perunagara-nāḍu, a subdivision of the Keṇkuṉṟa-kôṭṭam, informing him of the grant of the village Amancerkkahi and another 16 1/2 *paṭṭi* of land in the Dāmar village to Vajranandi. The previous rights of ownership are made over to the donnee, the old tenants are to be removed. The actual account of the granting of the land is given, the precise boundaries are named.

[19] The beginning is damaged, and the Sanskrit portion is imperfectly edited in Mahalingam 1988:89. The edition in *Transactions of the Archaeological Society of South India* 1958 is unavailable to me.

The point to which I want to call attention here will be banal for anyone who has read a single medieval Indian charter from southern India. But it is in part the very expectability, especially the division of linguistic labor that has become common-sense, that I want to underscore. For the entire 600-year duration of the Pallava dynasty, there exists not a single inscription in which Tamil does any work beyond recording the everyday—to record a remission of taxes, the boundaries of a land-grant, the receipt of goods, the transaction of a village council, the sale of land, the construction or renovation of a shrine, the death of a soldier. These, moreover, are all functions usually denied to Sanskrit from an early date; and while counterexamples may be found among earlier Pallava records where Sanskrit is used to *document* the everyday world (i.e., in the 'business' portion of the grant), it is important to stress that none exists where everyday local language is permitted to *interpret* the world (i.e., in the 'poetic' part of the grant).[20] This will not change until a new power with a new cultural politics comes to rule in the late tenth century(see below).

Elsewhere in southern India the relationship between Sanskrit and Prakrit, and Sanskrit and local language, as we can read this off the epigraphical record, is virtually identical to what we find in the case of the Pallavas of Tamil Nadu for most of the first millennium. Let me briefly survey the state of affairs in the lower Deccan, the region to the west and north of Tamil Nadu (the present-day states of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh). As we saw, in the middle of the fourth century the Vākāṭaka dynasty ceased to produce records in Prakrit and adopted Sanskrit exclusively. The same is true of the Pallavas, who adopt Sanskrit totally by the end of the same century. This is also the case with the Kadambas of northwestern Karnataka, the first historically recorded dynasty of that region. Whereas Mayūraśarman ca. 330-360 C.E. (thus virtually contemporaneous with the Pallava Śivaskandavarman)[21] is still writing

[20] One marginal exception to the documentary restriction of Tamil in Pallava grants is the striking account of the election of a new king, Nandivarman II, after the death of Parameśvara II in ca. 730 C.E. (Mahalinga No. 93).

[21] Contrast *Annual Report of the Mysore Archaeological Department*, for the year 1929:56, which argues for a date of 258 C.E., but on very shaky grounds. See also the pillar inscription

in Prakrit, the Tāḷagunda stone pillar inscription of the time of his great-great-grandson Śāntivarman (undated, ca. 455-470 C.E.),[22] is composed in wonderful literary Sanskrit. Prakrit not only disappeared throughout the subcontinent in the rush toward public Sanskritization, but it disappeared everywhere almost simultaneously.

> The situation of the Ikṣvākus, the ruling family of southeast Andhra that succeeded the Sātavāhana dynasty in about 225 C.E., and were themselves followed by the Pallavas ca. 300, may be a little asynchronous, but is otherwise telling. The first 40 of their 76 extant records are in Prakrit. Most of these come from Buddhist sites in Nagarjunakonda, though a number celebrate the *vaidika* achievements of the dynasty (e.g., EI 31:63, Chaṁtamula is the performer of the *agihota, agiṭhoma, asamedha* sacrifices, the donor of *gosatasahasa*, etc.; this epigraph adorned a pillar at a *stūpa*). The three Sanskrit epigraphs come from the third generation, the time of King Ehavala Śāntamūla; epigraphically these are said to belong to the "third or fourth century," so the language change may in fact be synchronous with Pallava developments. The Sanskrit items record the foundation of a temple of Śiva (EI 33:149), another temple foundation and endowment (EI 34:19), and the installation of a *śailamay ī pratimā* of the *saṁyaksaṁbuddha* (EI 35:12-13). All the remaining records are in Prakrit (Srinivasan and Sankaranarayanan 1979). Note again that not all Prakrit inscriptions are Buddhist in character, and not all Buddhist inscriptions are Prakrit.

The status of Kannada, for its part, exactly parallels that of Tamil in the Pallava records. In the epigraphs of the Gangas, one of the oldest attested dynasty in southwestern Karnataka, having ruled from the fourth-ninth centuries, Kannada is not used until the time of Avinīta in the sixth century, when again its function is documentary (Ramesh 1984:104).[23] But the record for the Gangas and Kadambas is thin for the

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of (probably) Mayūraśarman, in Prakrit, with a closing Sanskrit benediction, EC 7:252. According to G.S. Gai, the second extant record of the dynasty, the Chandravelli Kadamba inscription (Sircar 1965-83:Vol. 1:473), is not in fact in Prakrit, having only been mistranscribed as such; his forthcoming edition of Kadamba inscriptions will give the (virtually correct) Sanskrit text (personal communication, Dec. 1994).

[22] The Pillar inscription has a lively description of Mayūraśarman who goes to pursue his vedic studies in the Pallava capital Kāñcīpuram; it emphasizes his Sanskritic character, which for some scholars has made the use of Prakrit in his records unintelligible (cf. *Annual Report of the Mysore Archaeological Department*, p. 57 n. 4).

[23] The Kadamba family may have used Kannada—once—for documentary purposes from a somewhat earlier date, if we accept a mid-fifth century date of the Halmiḍi record (*Mysore Archaeological Report* 1936:72ff.); G. S. Gai gives good reason not to, however (*Journal of the Epigraphical Society of India* 17 [1991]); Maṅgaleśa's Bādāmi cave inscription (ca.

early period, and we can begin to follow the cultural politics of language in the Deccan kingdoms clearly only from the Bādāmi (Vātāpi) Cāḷukyas onward. And here we notice trends that confirm a general pattern emerging. As in the case of the Pallavas, the percentages of inscriptions that are wholly or partially in Kannada relative to those that are wholly in Sanskrit gradually rise, from 30% (30 out of 89) among the Bādāmi Cāḷukyas, ca. 543-757 C.E., to something like 90% (205 out of 230) among the Kalyāni Cāḷukyas, ca. 960-1200 C.E., the real turning point occurring in the world of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas.

> Here we can chart this shift in linguistic practices of the polity in some detail. Their first documents appear a little before 741 C.E. For the period between 741 and 819, 37 records are extant, of which 30 are in Sanskrit (81%), 7 in Kannada/Telugu (between 786 C.E. and 794 C.E., the wife of Dhruva, Śilamahādev ī issues 5 records in Kannada, which I am not counting here). Contrast with this the later developments: Between ca. 819 and 974, out of 94 records available today, 14 are in Sanskrit (15%), and 80 in Kannada. In the 33 year reign of Krishna II (881-914), who succeeded Amoghavarṣa, only 3 out of 41 records are in Sanskrit; in the reign of Krishna III, ca. 939-967, 180 records have been discovered, of which perhaps 10 are in Sanskrit (less than 6%).

In all these inscriptions, for something like the first 500 years, Kannada remains unwaveringly documentary (this holds for the first *versified* Kannada inscriptions of the Gangas, which begin in the eighth century [Ramesh 1984:254, 274; cf. xxxvi]). There appears not to be a single expressive record until the time of Krishna III of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa dynasty (after 939 C.E.),[24] that is, within a few generations of the first

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575-580 C.E.) would be the next earliest (IA 10:60). Note that the Halmiḍi inscription commences with a *maṅgalācaraṇa* to Acyuta in Sanskrit; Maṅgaleśa's is plain, documentary prose.

[24] The undated (stone) inscription is published in EI 19:289 (1927-28). The editor of the record is, oddly, silent about its importance as the first Kannada *praśasti* (which is what the text calls itself, line 36), as he is about its unusual find-spot, Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh—one of the rare Kannada inscriptions found outside of the Kannada-speaking region. Although this may be the first instance of public royal poetry, there are a few (very few) cases of inscribed Kannada verses from a little earlier, e.g., that of ca. 700 C.E. in IA 10:61 (a *vīragal*, in commemoration, n.b., of a brahman); several Jaina epigraphical verses not issuing for a royal court are found at Śravaṇabeḷgoḷa, EC 2 (revised ed. 1975): Ko 91,92), though their date is uncertain. A similar structure of cosmopolitan and regional language literary production occurs in Andhra; cf. Nagaraju forthcoming.

extant text of Kannada literature (the Kavirājamārgam, at the court of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa king Amoghavarṣa, ca. 850 C.E.).

It is surely an arresting fact that Sanskrit's competitor languages are so long disallowed any but a documentary function in the public domain of royal *praśasti* discourse, even in the case of those languages that clearly possessed substantial literary histories of their own, such as Tamil. I know of no study of the problem of language and polity in the successor formation to the Pallavas, that of the Coḷas, especially with regard to the question of when Tamil comes to be used for *praśasti* purposes, but a pass through the material indicates that Tamil is not, in fact, used for composing anything comparable to Sanskrit *praśastis* until the ornate historiographical records of Rājendra Coḷa, ca. 1025 C.E. (SII 1:95-99 or SII 2.1:105-9), or better, those of Rājādhirāja, ca. 1046 (SII 3.1:51-8), that is to say, about the same time as what most scholars identify as the epoch of Kamban and something of a new era of Tamil literature (see below).[25]

What generalizations can we make on the basis of all this epigraphical evidence? First, the transregional use of Sanskrit for public political texts in South India was instituted by no specific event of political or religious revolution, but instead by some far less obvious process of cultural imitation and borrowing, which I will consider more particularly at the end of this paper. Second, the development of Sanskrit seems to have been at the expense of local literary traditions—indeed, there obtained an inverse relation of cultural power with vernacular languages—and it accordingly receded as local literary language was re-asserted; and third, the cosmopolitan character that is generated by these transregional developments is not just a shared language but a shared language *practice* that points, among other things, toward something we might call the aestheticization of the political. Henceforth and for a millennium, if political will was to be expressed in a public text it would be expressed in Sanskrit. Indeed, a uniform idiom

[25] According to K. G. Krishnan, "Rājarāja I [985-1014] . . . was the first king in the Tamil country to use a preamble in verse [sc., in Tamil] detailing the achievements and the glory of the king's rule" (*Journal of Indian History, Golden Jubilee Volume*, ed. T. K. Ravindran [Trivandrum: U. of Kerala, 1973:109]). Although I have not done a detailed study of the matter, the Pandyas seem to use Tamil for expressive purposes a little earlier; see for example the undated (10th century?) plates printed in SII 3:441ff.

and aesthetics of politics, one remarkably homogeneous in diction, form, and theme—I have only been able to hint at this here—comes to characterize all of the subcontinent.

The elements of the Sanskrit cosmopolis as a political-cultural idiom are put in place in southern India in a matter of decades. Again, no 'Sanskrit' political formation had conquered the Deccan and peninsular India during this period; no religious revolution had occurred, no new revelation was produced in Sanskrit. The creation of a linguistically homogeneous, and conceptually almost standardized form of discourse seems to have just happened. And in a form of premodern globalization—or shall we say, early Westernization—much of the world to the east experiences a similar transculturation.

IV.

A little before the beginning of the common era, during one of the great axial moments in cross-cultural contact and exchange that saw the explosion of trade between South Asia and the Roman Empire, people of the subcontinent developed relationships of a new complexity and intensity with the regions to the east. These relationships and the migrations that were likely to have been associated with them were, as noted earlier, the efforts of small groups of traders, adventurers, religious professionals. There is no evidence that large-scale state initiatives were ever at issue, or that anything remotely resembling 'colonization' took place. No ties of political subservience ensued, no material dependency or exploitation; no demographically meaningful settlements of the subjects of any Indian polity; no military conquest (cf. Tarling 1992:I:281-82). Yet from about the fifth century on, or at more or less the same time as the cultural transformation described earlier was taking place on the subcontinent, Sanskrit inscriptions appear with an almost breath-taking simultaneity and with increasing frequency in what are now the nations of Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Indonesia (Sumatra, Borneo, and Java).[26] And while the fashion for Sanskrit epigraphs dies out rather quickly in Burma, some-

[26] Dated inscriptions do not begin to appear until about the seventh century. Earlier dates are established by paleography, whose calculations—in contrast to the precision claimed for records of the subcontinent—vary rather widely in terms both of dating and provenance of scripts. See further on this below.

what more slowly in Thailand and Champa (south Vietnam), they continue to be produced for centuries elsewhere: the last dated Sanskrit inscription in Cambodia, for instance, appears to be 1293 C.E. (BEFEO 25:393), a little before the abandonment of Angkor and the disappearance of public writing in Sanskrit. In Java, where the history of public and private Sanskrit is very different, royal texts in Sanskrit cease to be produced in any number after the ninth century, though they are occasionally composed as late as 1447 C.E. (de Casparis 1991:30).

In large parts of the region, then, for nearly a thousand years, the altogether exogenous code of Sanskrit with its incomparably complex mode of literary expression comes to be used in the Mon-Khmer- and Malayo-Polynesian-speaking worlds of Southeast Asia for the production of important and in some sense defining forms of political culture—a curious development, no doubt. And given the manner in which it occurred—without the enforcement of a military power or the pressure of an imperial administrative or legal apparatus—it has few obvious precedents. I want to chart very briefly the career of public Sanskrit in two areas, Khmer country and Java, concentrating on its relationship to pre-existing linguistic codes. I also want to point to a very significant difference in terms of the politics of vernacular culture that these two cases present.

In Khmer country, the history of Sanskrit begins with some undated records from what are supposed to belong to the so-called Funan polity, the first of the centralized polities that expressed their political will in Sanskrit.

Paleography is typically the argument used in dating, though Coedès thought he found confirmation in Chinese annals (BEFEO 31:8). It might be worth re-opening the questions both of the dating of these early records, and the vector of Indian contact. At least according to my reading of the inscriptions, the assumption of Pallava or east-coast Indian influence (Bhattacharya 1991:2) has hidden what may be the more important provenance: the Kadamban and later Cāḷukyan controlled regions of the western coast. Note for one thing that the dating systems of our records, from some of the earliest examples on, is in the Śaka year. The My-son Stele Inscription of Śambhuvarman from south Annam, for example, ends in a dating formula that we never find once among the Pallavas (who dated exclusively in regnal years), but rather among the Cāḷukyas: *-uttareṣu caturṣu varṣaśateṣu śakānāṁ vyatīteṣu* etc. (upper limit Śaka 499 = 577 C.E.). The Cāḷukyas and they alone at this time, date in the Śaka year, almost invariably from their first record on (EI 27:4-9 , the Bādāmi rock inscription of Chalikyo Vallabheśvara or Pulakeśin I, *śakavarṣeṣu catuśśateṣu pañcaṣaṣṭiyuteṣu* = Śaka 465 = 543 C.E.).[27] Their records moreover typically include some (or as in the case of the celebrated Aihoḷe record of Pulakeśin II, all) verse, as is found in the Southeast Asian texts; the Pallavas never use verse. Nagaraju 1984 argues on strictly paleographic grounds for a west-coast Indian provenance (see also Sircar 1965-83:Vol. 1:509n.).

Arguments for very early dating that are based on paleography, like Chhabra's mid-fifth century date of the Prosat Pram Loven Stone inscription of Guṇavarman, (Sircar 1965-83, vol. 1:511 = BEFEO 31.1), are vitiated by the fact that this form of Grantha was still in use at the beginning of the sixth century (Kumāraviṣṇu III) and even later (Mahalingam 1988 finds comparability between the Uruvupalli grant and a record of the *eighth century*; cf. his remarks on the chart no. 6 preceding the list of inscriptions); Sarkar also notes that the 'Pallava-Grantha' script found in Javanese inscriptions does not change much in the centuries between 400 and 750 C.E. (1971:2). Furthermore, the first *dated* records, of the early seventh century (Coedès 5:17, 613 C.E.; 5:20, 624 C.E.), show little of the discursive maturity of these putatively mid-fifth century texts. And last, although not impossible it would be improbable to find on the periphery of the Sanskrit world a form of textual complexity in inscriptions that had just become available at the center; this makes a third-century dated for the Vo-cahn inscription (Jacques in de Casparis 1991:10, and Bhattacharya 1991:6.) unlikely in the extreme.

The epigraphical habit in Sanskrit grows continuously in Khmer country from this early date onward, experiencing special efflorescence in the Angkor period. Of the approximately 200 *dated* Cambodian inscriptions in Sanskrit, only 20% (some 40) predate Angkor; for 225 or so *undated* Sanskrit inscriptions, only 35% (75-80) precede the founding of Angkor. And as the habit grows, so grow the complexity and indeed the importance of the inscriptions.

In general, the history of Cambodian inscriptional discourse follows that of continental South Asia closely. Early inscriptions in Sanskrit, up to the time of the founding of the Angkor dynasty in the early ninth century, are short if still fundamentally literary gestures. This is largely the case in the subcontinent, although longer *praśasti* texts become common already from an earlier period in the north (beginning of the fourth century), though not in the south. The Pallavas are still writing largely documentary instead of expressive records prior to about the seventh century (Medhāvin's text and a few others excepted), when

[27] Sircar argued that the spread of the Śaka dating system was co-extensive with the spread of Cāḷukya power (1965:259, 264; cf. also 1965-83:II.692-93; cf. also Nagaraju 1984:72).

things begin to change markedly, the innovating force likely being the Bādāmi Cāḷukyas and their Rāṣṭrakūṭa successors. Here political poetry, of which the Aihoḷe inscription of Ravikīrti is only the most famous of a number of examples, reaches a point of dazzling complexity (especially in the records of Govinda III and Amoghavarṣa). Detailing the temporal and stylistic connection between Cāḷukyan/Rāṣṭrakūṭa and Angkor poetry requires more space than I have here. What in short can be said straightway, however, is that between the 9th-13th centuries a very similar fascination with publicly displaying the most sophisticated forms of royal poetry seizes the minds of royal elites in Khmer country exactly as it had in India.

These early Cambodian records are thoroughly infused with the idiom, intelligence, and political imagination of the Sanskrit subcontinent. There is no question that local inflections are present from the beginning, for example, a Sanskritized Buddhism conjoined with royal eulogy (as in the Ta Prohm Stone record of Rudravarman [Sircar no. 83 = BEFEO 31.8], see below), such as is rarely found in the subcontinent, and especially a foregrounded presence of women related to specific kinship structures in the region.[28] But in general Angkoran inscriptional discourse is thoroughly comparable to what one finds in India, in terms of substance, form, and performative character. It is again the self-presentation of royal elites, composed in a Sanskrit that deploys, and increasingly so over the following centuries, all the rhetorical and formal resources of the most complex and sophisticated poetry, not to speak of a virtually perfect orthography and grammar whose mastery

[28] Women are prominent from the very first verse of the first record, the Neak Ta Dambang Dek Stone inscription of the time of Jayavarman, to the very last, of 1293 (BEFEO 25:393), which contains a *praśasti* of Śrīśrīndramukyamahiṣī. (A good example is the Mebon Inscription [BEFEO 25:309ff.]: it begins with a eulogy first of Sarasvatī, then of the maternal aunt of Balāditya (vs. 10), her daughter, Mahendradevī, vs. 11-12. Consider these two verses: "When the clan was gone and joined with the gods, a girl, a second Lakṣmī to benefit the world, a noble coral tree of fame, took birth from the milk ocean of that clan [*pace* Finot]. Her name was Mahendradevī, a lordly daughter of kings, her fame was constantly sung by the celestial nymphs. Mahendravarman married her and thereby made his lordship complete.") It is thus puzzling to read in the new *Cambridge History of Southeast Asia*, "Our ability precisely to define the role of women in early Southeast Asian society is clouded by the epigraphic records . . . initiated by an élite who were emulating Indic culture. True to the Indian epics and religions that promoted male superiority and female dependency, there are infrequent references to women. . . ." (Tarling 1992:190).

shows no slackening up to the very moment of its disappearance. And it is publicly performed, so to put it, displayed in places of great symbolic importance, on pillars in royal or aristocratic temple precincts. The Ta Prohm Stone inscription, a fragment of what must have been a very fine piece of poetry, is rather typical of these first inscriptions.[29] It is one that is good to think with for figuring out what Sanskrit is deployed in Khmer country to do: make untestable, imaginary, persuasive—literary—claims about the world.

> Two striking *maṅgalācaraṇa* s to the Buddha are followed by eleven verses to king Rudravarman, e.g.: "He who by reason of his own superiority, does not consider any virtue too small. Like a crown upon the heads of the worlds he <...> to stand — As if offering to view all the virtues of kings assembled in a single place the Creator made this singular being on earth, King Rudravarman [*pace* Coedès]. All goodly deeds this king has done in his quest for ultimate *dharma*...."

This purpose is one that vernacular language texts are never allowed to execute. The fate of non-Sanskrit is one of the two additional features of the textual culture of Khmer country that I want to discuss in relation to inscriptional Sanskrit, and is one already familiar to us. The other is the nature and extent of Sanskrit literary culture itself beyond the domain of public poetry, something to me at least puzzling.

Precisely as we have seen to be the case in much of South Asian cultural history before the last quarter of the first millennium C.E., regional language inscriptional production in Khmer is eschewed in any capacity other than the documentary-contractual. Dated inscriptions in Khmer come to be published almost at the same time as dated inscriptions in Sanskrit (early seventh century), whereas undated Khmer inscriptions appear scarcely a century after undated Sanskrit inscriptions, if that. Nearly half of all inscriptions are solely in Khmer, one third are in Sanskrit alone, and a quarter utilize both languages. One invariable feature of them all is the linguistic hyperglossia we encountered in India: Sanskrit is rarely used to make purely documentary statements, Khmer is never used to make expressive, workly statements. Moreover, the two languages had a very unequal relationship with each other.

[29] The record is probably to be dated to the mid-sixth century. Perhaps I misunderstand when Jacques asserts that "no such composition [? i.e., ornate *praśastis*] at all has been found before the reign of Yaśovarman I" (in de Casparis 1991:9).

Whereas Sanskrit is, linguistically, utterly uninfluenced by Khmer—except for personal names, Khmer words never appear in Sanskrit—Khmer (indeed, like Kannada, for example) is massively invaded by Sanskrit at least at the lexical level, and from the earliest period (Pou in de Casparis 1991:12ff.; cf. also Bhattacharya 1991:6). Not only does this indicate that vernacular literacy was mediated by Sanskrit literacy (as was probably the case for most of India),[30] but also that there was a relationship of asymmetrical cultural authority between them.

The presence of public Sanskrit in Khmer country during this thousand year period raises a number of complex questions about transculturation even more starkly than for southern India. Who, exactly, are the agents of this transculturation is one of the more fascinating of them.

> Khmer kings sometimes allude to an Indian ancestry: in the first inscription of Yaśovarman (889 C.E.), for example, one ancestor is said to be "a Brahman who knew the vedas and vedāṅgas and had achieved success in Āryadeśa (*vedavedāṅgavid āryadeśe / labdhodayaḥ* [Majumdar 1953, No. 60, pp. 74ff. vs. 5]). There was, moreover, undoubtedly some circulation of intellectuals back and forth to the subcontinent, especially in the case of Śrīvijaya and the Buddhist university at Nālandā in Bodh Gayā, eastern Bihar; the Plaosan (central Java) temple inscription of ca. 800 C.E. refers to the "constant flow of people from Gurjaradeśa" (Sarkar 1971:No. 10, 48), while Coḷas (along with Khmers and others) are mentioned to be in Java (Van Naerssen 1977:43 and n. 95). Indian brahmans were occasionally imported, as for example for the lustration of the Khmer domain in the ninth century (Coedès IC 4:42 vs. 14; noted by Wolters 1982:91).

Whatever else may be the case, we know that Sanskrit culture was completely indigenized. Khmer princes could and did write royal *praśasti*s in the Angkoran domain—at least they are identified as the authors (Sūryakumāra, as composer of the Ta Prohm Inscription of Jayavarman VII [1186 C.E.; Majumdar 1953, No. 177], is the king's son, as is Vīrakumāra, composer of the Pra Khan inscription [No. 178]). The growth of a class of Khmer brahmans is perfectly reasonable (de Casparis in Tarling 1992:287), for precisely such a development occurred in Java and Bali.

[30] A good parallel is found in Latin. In Germany in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, for example, "notwithstanding the extensive production of poetic and prose works in the vernacular, we have no positive evidence of even basic literacy without the study of Latin" (Palmer 1993:7).

Why Sanskrit was used at all is a no less vexing question, and while I return to it at the end of this paper in a more theoretical vein, it is worth reviewing scholarly opinion. Southeast Asian scholarship, for its part, seems noticeably uninterested in the question.[31] O.W. Wolters, for example, who has written the most interesting account of Southeast Asia as a cultural region, and who asks large questions, never wonders about the language practices of Angkor documents, never asks why or for whom Khmer people are writing in Sanskrit.[32] One recent view expresses skepticism about Coedès belief that Sanskrit was the "official language of the royal chancellery," for which there seems to be no evidence; on the contrary, everything points to the use of Khmer for everyday pragmatic functions. But from this we are led to the opposite pole: The Sanskrit of the Khmer inscriptions had only one audience, the gods, since the élite that knew Sanskrit was too small to account for their use, and since they are found only on temple sites:

"The overwhelming majority of Sanskrit poem inscriptions of the ancient Khmer territory are prayers to the divinities of Indian origin, which explains the use of this language. They have been cut in stone in order to remind the gods of a king or a commoner who has made religious foundations or endowments. . . . In actual fact concrete data given in those poems are comparatively scanty. . . . The essential fact . . . is that without exception all these inscriptions were placed in temples or sacred areas, which implies that they are concerned directly either with the gods (if they are in Sanskrit) or with the administration of gods' properties (if they are in Khmer); and that is precisely confirmed by the reading of these texts" (Jacques 1986:328; cf.1991:12).

We do however find inscriptional discourse that is not exclusively "concerned directly either with the gods or with the administration of gods' properties." An important (undated) family poem found in Coedès V:238, in the editor's words, "ne relate aucune fondation, aucune donation, et semble avoir simplement pour objet de préciser l'étendue du domaine de la famille." Moreover, the inscriptional poems

[31] In their book on Java, van Naerssen and de Jongh do not mention the language question once.

[32] He asks, however, why the Vietnamese in the fourteenth century are writing in Chinese (they are appropriating the foe's language "to defend . . . [an] independent status in the face of Chinese imperial pretensions," 1982:74).

have nothing like the form of prayer (though the category has no simple definition in Sanskrit traditions), except in the initial *maṅgalācaraṇas*, and if these made them prayers all Sanskrit literature would be prayer.

The Khmer inscriptions evidently have got some other, political-cultural, work to do. They make claims about political power of particular kings, and are directed to those for whom such knowledge is pertinent, the royal élites. They are the "you" whom the *praśastikāra* typically invokes in the opening *maṅgalas* of such texts to receive the benefits of the prayer (cf. e.g., Coedès V:47, V:239.10a; V:251.11; 13; 15; 19). The fact that they are found at temples need only signify that the temple construction was also occasion for the narrativization of kingly being. The discourse of the *praśastis* is of a piece with that found in a copper-plate and other kinds of inscriptions in India, which are clearly not addressed to 'gods'. That these were texts of importance for the polity itself—not metaphysical messages—is indicated by the family inscriptions studied by Michael Vickery (1985).

> Vickery identifies a serious jockeying for position within the Angkoran bureaucracy at work in the Sanskrit inscriptions of the period of Sūryavarman I. These are "historical genealogical inscriptions set up by hereditary official families for the purpose of recording their claims to property and rank throughout the previous two hundred years from the reign of Jayavarman II.. . . It is as though these families were intensely preoccupied with their prerogatives and property and with the establishment of formal claims to them. As the Russian historian, Sedov, put it, 'one senses a tendency on the part of the authors to use any pretext at all, even the most insignificant, to erect a stele listing the properties of their families'" (Vickery 1985:232). That these inscriptions were considerably more than prayerful messages to the gods, that what they communicated (challenges to rival elites, according to Vickery) was meant to be read and to be taken seriously, is further suggested by the repetition of the same record in various scripts on the same stele (Majumdar 60, 61) or by the painstaking care with which stele were sometimes faked (see the case already signaled by Coedès, K. 834, Vol. 5:244ff.). That they were made in Sanskrit renders them all the more arresting, and raises yet more questions about listening or reading publics, and the uses of these texts. There is no reason to believe that the aesthetics and politics of the royal inscriptions were taken any less seriously.

Agents and audiences aside, the language practice, and the linguistic asymmetry between Sanskrit and Old Khmer, are clear: political poetry in Cambodia is Sanskrit poetry, never Old Khmer. We might want to formulate this more strongly: Textualized literature up to the end of

Angkor is Sanskrit literature; there is no evidence for non-Sanskrit *literate* literary production before the *seventeenth* century.[33] It should go without saying that stating this fact does not deny literary imagination to a people, but brings to consciousness the cultural, and indeed political, conditions under which the literization of literature—the privilege of expressive, workly, non-documentary inscription—becomes possible in history. The character of Khmer language-usage in texts that are preserved to us, and the later historical development of Khmer literature combine to suggest strongly that the latter could not come into existence, as a literized entity, until Sanskrit literary culture came to an end in the fourteenth century.[34]

But—and here I come to something that mystifies me in Cambodia—political poetry is *all the Sanskrit in Cambodia that there is*. There is no literary habit of Sanskrit beyond this, no new, *non-epigraphic* texts in the language. The Khmer world produced a Sanskrit literary culture that mastered and mastered fully a complete grammar, lexicon, metric, mythography. To read the well-known Mebon or Pre Rup inscriptions of Rājendravarman from the late tenth century (BEFEO 34:770ff.) is to realize that the entire canon of Sanskrit poetry was studied, from the Mahābhārata and Rāmāyaṇa to the Raghuvaṁśa and Sūryaśataka, along with the canon of shastric texts from the Kāmasūtra to the Suśruta. Yet this mastery appears to have been deployed in the production of not a single line of Sanskrit literature other than the pub-

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[33] This was disputed by Coedès, who believed in vast quantities of old Khmer literature destroyed in "the one long series of disastrous wars" that is the history of Cambodia (cited by Zoetmulder 1972:17). Zoetmulder rightly doubts "the very existence [of old Khmer and Cham literature] through the entire period of close relations with Indian culture," pointing to the preservation of Javanese literature in precisely the conditions that Coedès thought accounted for the absence of Khmer literature (ibid.). The first epigraphic text in Khmer verse is dated 1701, though a manuscript work in Khmer verse (indeed, the oldest extant), the *Lpoek Aṅgar Vatt*, the 'Poem of Angkor Vat', is dated 1620 (Khing 1990:24-59). The lone shred of early 'Khmer' verse in inscriptions I know of is a four-line strophe in mixed Sanskrit-Khmer dated Śaka 896 = 974 C.E., engraved on the wall of a Buddhist cave; it functions as the *śāsana* for the foundation of the sanctuary, the *maṅgala* being in Sanskrit (JA 1914:637-44 = Coedès nos. 173, 174).

[34] Compare the history of the gradual literization of Vietnamese after its emancipation from Chinese cultural hegemony beginning the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries (Wolters 1982:72ff.; cf. above n. 32).

lic poetry of the *praśasti*.[35] Occasional reference is made to other kinds of textual production in this world (a twelfth-century Cham king "supported his accession to the throne by writing a Sanskrit treatise" said to resemble a *smṛti*; the tenth-century Khmer king Yaśovarman is purported to have composed a new commentary on the Mahābhāṣya).[36] But none of this original production, if it ever existed, is extant, and never entered into any kind of local tradition of reproduction or memory.

Sanskrit was thus *exclusively* the cosmopolitan language of elite self-presentation, in both senses of the word: Only Sanskrit was used for this purpose, and it appears to have been used for no other. Why and how that mode of self-presentation had become desirable in the first place, and why it related as it did to local modes—the issues of transculturation, vernacularization, and ideology—are critical if complicated questions, to which I return below. Potential answers become even more elusive when we try to account for the very different career of Sanskrit in the other case-study I want briefly to introduce, that of Java.

In Java, the history of Sanskrit runs a very different course from what we saw to be the case in Khmer country. There are, all told, only something like 250 inscriptions. They begin to appear, as elsewhere in Southeast Asia, in the early fifth century, but continue to be produced in any number only through the ninth, when the first inscriptions in Old Javanese come to be written. As in the case of Khmer inscriptions, these are all royal documents; there is no 'epigraphical habit' that extended outside the kraton.

There is no doubt that these documents from old Java have much in common with the materials we have been examining. They include (and are often self-described as) copper-plate grants (*tāmraprašasti*), *jayapatras* (here, 'edicts'), and *praśastis*. Many formal features in these different genres are shared with the mainland examples (freehold grants, for example, record the date, the king's name and virtues, the specifications of the grant, and end with imprecations), and much of their political-aesthetic idiom.

[35] Jacques seems to argue for their existence (in de Casparis 1991:5), but on what grounds? Of what Sanskrit texts beside the one or two dubious instances I mention have we any secure knowledge?

[36] For the first, see Wolters 1982:44; for the second, Phnom Sandak Stele Inscription, Majumdar no. 73b, p. 155 verse 13 (though I don't derive that sense from this verse).

> Instructive here is the Ligor Inscription from the Malay Peninsula (775 C.E.; Chhabra 1965:26ff.). The record decidedly foregrounds the language and the formal structures of Sanskrit poetry: It deploys all four kinds of metric (*samavṛtta, ardhasama-, viṣama-, jāti*); *alaṁkāras* in profusion, rare grammatical forms. It begins without *maṅgala*, directly praising the king Śrīmahārāja Śailendravaṁśaprabhu, "a sun to destroy the darkness that is his foes," moonlike, Kāma-like, handsome. His fame outshines that of other kings; he is the support of his own virtues and of other virtuous men. "Those whose hopes had been destroyed by the ring of flaming fire of poverty he restored to their state of well-being; as springtime is to mango trees so the king is to the virtuous. . . ."

But there are some features that to my mind distinguish Javanese Sanskrit inscriptions from anything else. For one thing, the bureaucratic jargon of the documents deploys a large number of official titles the majority of which are non-Sanskritic (Sarkar 1971:xix). A more elusive difference is the general aesthetic: From the very first record, the undated commemorations of the footprints of King Pūrṇavarman and his elephant, or the fifth, a verse inscribed on rock in praise of a near-by stream (which, with its clear cool water is as purifying as the Gaṅgā), a certain local genius can be glimpsed through the Sanskrit inscriptions that to some degree sets them apart from others (I have found nothing comparable in Khmer epigraphs). The stone inscription of Sañjaya (732 C.E.), for example (after a standard opening with date, reference to the establishment of a liṅgam by the king, two verses to Śiva, one to Svayaṁbhu, one to Śrīpati), contains a striking *māhātmya* of "the incomparable island of Java (*dvīpavaraṁ yavākhyam atulam*), rich in grain and goldmines, won by the gods with sacred mantras. Soon enough though we return to an almost-familiar idiom:

> There was a goodly king who protects the earth according to *dharma* and ruled over his subjects affectionately like a father over his son, and his name was Sanna. He died in the course of time, and the world was helpless and grief-stricken. But there had arisen from him, like another Mt. Meru, Sañjaya, the color of gold, with large arms and thighs, and tall, being "elevated by having his feet upon the kings who were the 'principal mountains' (*kulācala-*) situated on the earth." Respected by the learned, understanding the finest points of *śāstra*; like Raghu he defeated numerous neighboring kings [metrically corrupt]; he rules now according to *nyāya*. And so long as he rules people can sleep on the king's highway without fear of robbers; they

gain *dharma, artha*, and *kāma*. "Surely the Kali Age is weeping ceaselessly, for there is no place here to take the impress of its limbs."

The first use of Old Javanese in public documents of which I am aware is 804 C.E. (BEFEO 46:24ff.), or at least 400 years after the earliest records; after that date, and very quickly, Old Javanese becomes increasingly and then exclusively the language used in official texts. The inscriptional materials in Old Javanese are virtually without exception documentary and not workly texts (something like 90% of them are *sīmas*, or legal transfers of tax rights usually to religious institutions). What is striking is how quickly, relative to what we find in mainland Southeast Asia or in India itself, Old Javanese begins to crowd out—or maybe better put, encompass—Sanskrit. Sanskrit was used seriously only through the middle of the ninth century, after which time it seems to have come to an end as a major form of public expression. Concomitantly, however—to turn directly to the fate of vernacular literary culture—we find from about the tenth century on an efflorescence of belles-lettres in Old Javanese unlike anything else in all of Southeast Asia. As in Khmer country there is little evidence of original textual as opposed to epigraphic composition in Sanskrit (many Sanskrit verses are transmitted in Old Javanese literary texts, however, which cannot always be traced).[37]

If Sanskrit had disappeared from the inscriptional domain, it lived on in an amazing way in the literary. As is well known from the work of Gonda and especially Zoetmulder, the impact here is profound; the latter remarks that "Sanskrit was so much part of that new culture which [the Javanese] wanted to make their own and to which they wanted to adapt themselves" that they adopted language even where their own was adequate (1972:9, 12), to the point that upwards of 40% of the Old Javanese lexicon is derived from Sanskrit.[38] Thematically, all these Old

[37] According to Zoetmulder (1974:16) "We have no direct proof that new books in Java were written in Sanskrit"; *āgama* and other ritual texts may be an exception (and those later tantric and magical materials composed in what has been called 'archipelago Sanskrit') though even here it is not clear whether most of this material was not imported.

[38] Indeed, Sanskritization has returned, like the repressed, in the present. Among the three sociolinguistic levels of modern Javanese, *ngoko, krama*, and *krama inggil*, the last is a "consciously archaizing Sanskritic sublanguage" emerging under the socially hierarchizing pressures generated by Dutch colonialism (Anderson 1991:131ff; 205ff; note the words for 'horse' in the three levels: *jaran, kapal, turangga*).

Javanese texts developed via a systematic adaptation, sometimes translation, of Sanskrit works over a six-hundred year period from the ninth or tenth century These include the epics (the so-called *parwa* literature, containing interspersed Sanskrit *pratīkas*), *purāṇas*, lexicons, grammars, didactic works; and especially the genre of *kakawin* (= *kāvya*) (Zoetmulder 1974:22-24; 68; 89). The whole linguistic and cultural development of *kakawin* literature—the highly Sanskritized idiom (perhaps as much as a third of the lexical items are *tatsamas*), the complex forms of Sanskrit versification, and in many cases the close appropriation of narratives from Sanskrit originals—bears the closest comparison with what is taking place in regions like Karnataka and Andhra at precisely the same time.

Thus we have several commonalities but also some important and puzzling differences. As elsewhere in Southeast Asia, Sanskrit in Java is the first vehicle for literized royal self-expression. The public texts in Sanskrit evince substantial learning and the language is largely untouched by the local idiom. Strikingly, but precisely what we saw to be the case in Cambodia, there appears to have been no Sanskrit textual production in Java beyond inscriptional poetry. On the other hand, and unlike virtually every other region where the vernacular is quickly literized under the influence of Sanskrit,[39] Javanese is absent from public inscription for almost half a millennium, but when Javanese does begin to be used for public records, these are exclusively documentary, just as elsewhere. Much sooner than elsewhere the habit of Sanskrit inscriptions becomes obsolete, and then a dynamic Sanskritizing literature in Old-Javanese, without parallel in Southeast Asia, but remarkably similar to what is found around the same time in much of southern India, begins to be produced. Sanskrit begins to die in Java the moment old Javanese begins to live, as five hundred years later in Cambodia, Khmer literature comes into being once Sanskrit has vanished.

And more generally, while there is all manner of variation throughout the Sanskrit cosmopolis as a whole, a significant uniformity invests it with a kind of unity. A traveler around the year 1000 one would have seen, from the plain of Kedu in central Java to the basin of Tonlé Sap in

[39] Perhaps considerably earlier than the concrete evidence indicates, as de Casparis argues from the tendency to overuse the *virāma* (in imitation of the clear word-boundary style of Indonesian) in the Dinoyo grant of 760 C.E. (de Casparis 1975:31).

Cambodia, from Gaṅgaikoṇḍacoḷapuram in Tamil Nadu to Patan in Gujarat and beyond, imperial formations that had many features in common. The material and social ones I have ignored here: their largely hierarchized societies, administered by a corps of functionaries, scribes, tax collectors, living in grand agrarian cities geometrically planned in orientation to the cardinal points and set within imaginary geographies that with their local mountains, rivers, and springs recapitulated the geography of India,[40] urban structures "freighted with cosmic symbolism, helping one to visualize the order of things" (generalizing Lombard's eloquent description of Java, 1990:11). It is their common political-cultural, especially literary-cultural, features I have emphasized: the existence of cultural and political élites assiduously mastering the intricate codes and protocols of Sanskrit poetry, and the publication of their works throughout these cities, in varying degrees of density and grandeur—stately public poems in Sanskrit engraved on the ubiquitous copper-plates recording gifts and donations, or on stone pillars looming up from gigantic architectural wonders.

There was thus, I think, a certain concrete reality to the 'Sanskrit cosmopolis', one that does not exist only in the retrospective gaze of the historian. For a millennium, and across half the world, élites participated in a peculiar supralocal ecumene. This was a form of shared life very different from that produced by common subjecthood or fealty to a central power, even by shared religious liturgy or credo. It was instead a symbolic network created in the first instance by the presence of a similar kind of discourse in a similar language deploying a similar idiom and style to make similar kinds of claims about the nature and aesthetics of polity—about kingly virtue and learning; the *dharma* of rule; the universality of dominion. A network, accordingly, wherein the élite shared "a broadly based communality of outlook," and could perceive "ubiquitous signs of its beliefs."[41]

[40] Cf. Groslier for Cambodia: "Toute la toponymie khmère ancienne, au moins sous sa forme sanscrite, montre cette volonté de reconstituer au Cambodge la géographie sacré des Indes, aves ses montagnes, ses fleuves, ses sources saintes, etc." (BEFEO 1977:179). The same is true of Java, and for much of India itself.

[41] This apt description of the Sanskrit cosmopolis is how Wolters characterizes Southeast Asia (1982:43); more on which below.

V.

The point of the admittedly dry exercise I have just undertaken—tracing the historical trajectory along which Sanskrit with its specific idiom and aestheticization of politics (if that is the right way to formulate it) traveled in the thousand-year period between about 300 and 1300 C.E. throughout South and Southeast Asia—is to make social-theoretical sense of it. How are we to render this process intellectually useful and not just ideographically diverting? Can we determine the conditions that enabled this language, and with it a large meaning-system, to spread in the peculiar ways it did and with such vast translocality, to become the means by which a whole world gave voice to a political vision? How are we to grasp the power of such cultural forms, their attraction for local people, their careers, their hegemony over or compromise with the vernacular, especially in relation to questions of social identity and political formation as these come to be embodied in cultural—and above all, in literary—expression?

I say "peculiar ways" because how these developments took place seems to be without obvious parallel. Let me restate them. First is the fact that, in much of South let alone Southeast Asia, Sanskrit nowhere approached a language of everyday life—not the language of the market, the army, the kitchen, of childhood, friendship, or love.[42] Furthermore, none of the conditions obtains in the Sanskrit cosmopolis for what Benedict Anderson (the only scholar who has thought both politically and differentially about translocal languages before and after modernity) calls "classical communities linked by sacred languages" (1983). Unlike all other such communities, which "conceived of themselves as cosmically central," the Sanskrit cosmopolis had no unambiguous real center (as opposed to a mythic and—as we have seen—infi-

[42] One even has doubts, for Southeast Asia, about Sanskrit as a language of *popular* religious propagation. I don't think there is any more textual evidence to suggest the development of a *sermo humilis* or *evangelicus* for Sanskrit than there is a *sermo militaris* or *rusticus*. To query the social location and depth of the spread of Sanskrit is not of course to minimize the importance of religious professionals in its spread. There are celebrated Chinese pilgrim accounts of Sanskrit in Śrīvijaya—no one disputes the propagation of Sanskrit in scholastic circles (though paradoxically it was precisely Śrīvijaya that for much of its history eschewed Sanskrit for public discourse). In northeast Asia, where we have vastly more evidence, the propagation of Mahāyāna during these centuries (and by these same pilgrims) was taking place in regional languages.

nitely reproducible one). No developed conception of an 'immense community' is found, as in Christendom, Ummah Islam, and the Middle Kingdom. There is no fixity—'unsubstitutability' or 'non-arbitrariness'—of Sanskrit's written sign, as in Latin, Arabic, Chinese, which Anderson believes helps constitute such a community. The scripts used for Sanskrit changed over time, with regional varieties present from a very early period. And we have already discounted from the beginning such standard conditions of cultural transformation as those associated with imperial subjugation or its bureaucratic inducements.

What I want to stress is that all of this holds equally true for the 'Indian' no less than for the Southeast Asian side of this world—indeed, it is not clear what except the later nomenclature distinguishes these regions (on which more below). The career of Sanskrit in Java , for example, is to a striking degree homomorphic with its career in Karnataka or Kerala; its history in Cambodia, where Sanskrit occupied the total linguistic space of political and literate literary discourse (though not 'business' discourse) for a millennium, is the same only more so, and puts the entire question into greater relief. How do we understand the processes by which whole social strata willingly abandon their linguistic routines and doxa, and submit, altogether voluntarily, to a new culture, especially one so mercilessly disciplined as that of Sanskrit; and those other processes by which the local is re-asserted? These are very large questions—the problems of transculturation, vernacularization, and ideology in my title—which I can hope, not to answer but only to pose in some useful way in concluding this paper. And I can do so at this point only by a kind of negative dialectic, without offering a final grand theory (for which real history is usually too messy anyway). There are two distinct analytical issues I want first to address—(a) the historiographical mis-en-scène within which the whole question is currently placed, and (b) the social theory available to us, now, to make sense of it—before considering (c) some alternative formulations.

(a) The history of the treatment of these questions especially in Southeast Asia studies is instructive, and for a newcomer to the field falls rather easily into two major phases of research. The first was the colonial-European and Indian-chauvinist stage, which sought, in the European case, an antecedent to its own contemporary imperial project,

and, in the Indian case, the consolation of its own great 'colonial' past in the face of a humiliating colonized present. One of the typical Indian voices here is that of R. C. Majumdar, who conceived of the growth of the Sanskrit cosmopolis as colonization by a master race—the "Indian colonists" confronting "local people [who] were almost semi-savages," and "how all these were changed and Indian social and religious ideas were deeply implanted in the soil"—for it is almost "a universal law, that when an inferior civilization comes in contact with a superior one, it gradually tends to be merged into the latter" (1944:23). The source of such thinking, and probably of the specific construction, is European. The French art-historian Alfred Foucher, for example, had argued in the 1930s that "En résumé, il ne s'agit pas ici d'une simple influence mais dans toute la force du terme, d'une véritable colonisation" (cited Chakravarti 1978-80:viii). For their part, French orientalists evidently viewed what they saw as premodern colonization by Indians as a forerunner of their own civilizing mission—Coedès in fact speaks of the "civilizing activity of India" (1968:xvi)—and Lombard is probably right to see, among the Dutch, an anti-Islamic undercurrent in the linkage between Dutch and early 'aryan' colonization, punctuated by a somber Muslim interlude (1990:12).

The second phase of research was inaugurated by decolonization in the region after WW II, which, predictably, stimulated a quest for the local, the indigenous, the autochthonous. The object of study was no longer to be what was brought into the region—"Southeast Asia as a receptacle for external influences"—but the continuity and specificity of 'native' culture itself, "the cultural distinctiveness of Southeast Asia both as a whole and in its parts" (Reid 1990:1). The emphasis was on recuperating some kind of cultural authenticity, indeed, culture itself, apart from the Sanskrit cosmopolitan species. This approach achieves a sophisticated formulation in the work of O. W. Wolters (1982), whose sustained argument, echoed by many writers since, is that 'Indianization' did not introduce "an entirely new chapter in the region's history," but "brought ancient and persisting indigenous beliefs into sharper focus."[43]

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[43] Indianization for example made possible "a heightened perception of the [already existent] overlord's superior prowess" via his ascetic (= heroic) achievement and therefore relationship with Śiva (Wolters 1982:10-11); it did not create a new form of political power.

Much of this (often masterful) analysis is open to criticism, not least for what strikes the non-Southeast Asianist as its defensive indigenism. Indeed, the very concepts 'indigenism' and 'autochthonism' are empty ones for those who take cultures to be, not things, but processes, and who accordingly consider 'the indigenous' either only as the moment on a timeline prior to the particular transformation one is studying and illegitimately generalized, or as the point prior to which it is impossible to historicize—but not anything essential to the ethnos. The kinds of transculturation processes at work in the Sanskrit cosmopolis, I will argue below, are ongoing and permanent; they mark all culture.

This is not to claim that cultural flows from the subcontinent encountered an empty space, let alone that nothing local came to be added to the translocal cultural flows that were received; on the other hand, for the key conceptions that Wolters cites such as 'universal' sovereignty and intimate relationship or identity with the supreme god, which empowered Southeast Asian polities in the historical period, there is a lot of Indian, and no Southeast Asian, evidence. Of crucial importance is the fact that the symbology of imperial sovereignty was never expressed, as we have seen, in any language other than Sanskrit, and it is not probative (because non-falsifiable) to say that Sanskrit could have been expressing non-Sanskrit notions ('prehistoric features'; Wolters 1982:15, 91ff.). It is notable, too, that so much of Wolter's interpretation of Southeast Asian kingship—when presumably he is arguing within the framework of prehistorical, 'indigenous' continuity—is derived from Sanskrit materials.

Much of this historical revisionism is also marked by an essentialization of 'India', as if the cultural worlds of the subcontinent were themselves some singular stable entity and not at the same time involved in a dynamic process of self-fashioning. There seems to be no awareness of the fact that the 'Indianization' of Southeast Asia was not dissimilar from the 'Indianization' of India; the peculiar local responses to this process cannot mark off the region from India, which itself was responding in similar ways. It is thus ironic that much of Wolter's characterization, which he thinks should be able to contribute

to a "genuinely Southeast Asian history" (1982:44), actually applies just as well to India itself.[44]

> Similar arguments can be raised in response to Denys Lombard's recent assessment. Although he sees a 'Southeast Asian culture' (in the singular) arising in this period—"si la notion d' 'Asie du Sud-est' a bien aujourd'hui de solides fondementes géo-historiques, c'est que le coeur de Java a battu pendant près d'un millénaire au même rythme que celui d'Angkor et de Pagan, puis de Sukhotai"—he does not want to grant any role to transcultural processes in constructing this. He asserts, for instance, that Sanskrit as used in Java "refers to realities that are properly Javanese" (1990:13-14). This suggests a philosophy of reality that sees it as constituted prior to language, rather than seeing 'reality' as constructed by language and discourse; and a cultural logic that posits a primordial 'Javaneseness' over which Sanskrit is laid, rather than seeing historical Javanese culture as never a unitary thing but a constant process, of which Sanskrit is part. Precisely the same can be said of India, for there is no singular 'Indian culture' to exert 'Indianization', whereas India itself is 'Indianized' just as Java is 'Indianized'. To be sure, understanding the Sanskrit texts of Java means placing them in a Javanese social world. This is true of every text everywhere; there is no Sanskrit text in 'India' that does not need, in some non-trivial sense, to be placed in a 'cadre local' to be understood (1990:14). The authors of the *kakawin* s may stand in the same relation to Sanskrit as Corneille and Racine to Greek and Latin authors, but this applies equally well to Kamban, Pampa, Nannaya, Eḻuttacchan, Sāraḷādās, Tulsidās. What does his analogy really tell us about cultural models, transculturation, and the social identities constituted by literature?

(b) Analysis of the cultural transformation of especially Southeast Asia is typically underpinned by a functionalism that seems not only anachronistic but conceptually flawed. The weak functionalism (e.g., Filliozat 1977:405) that explains the role of Sanskrit in much of the cosmopolis but especially in Southeast Asia as driven by *practical* interregional communication needs (i.e., beyond what pertains to scholastic environments) I have already questioned. If there was anything approaching an everyday Southeast Asian koiné influenced by a South Asian language, that language was likely to have been Tamil.[45]

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[44] I now find that Hermann Kulke makes a similar argument, not for quite the same methodological reasons but to sustain his hypothesis that South India and Southeast Asia stood in a relationship not of primacy and imitation but of 'cultural convergence', both of them responding to the same local social-political needs in the same ways (1990:22ff., 26).

[45] Consider the number of Tamil words in Malay, which came about through trade and commerce, cited by Filliozat himself (1977:401f.; some of what are taken to be Tamil words sedimented in Southeast Asian languages could, of course, be old Kannada [*mala* for *malai*,

A stronger and more refined functionalism holds that the idea-system of which Sanskrit was the vehicle was needed for political 'legitimation'. We find this notion coupled with a kind of post-Independence indigenist revisionism in Paul Wheatly's assessment a generation ago: Southeast Asians were "relatively advanced" at the beginning of the common era, and "came to realize the value of Indian concepts as a means of legitimizing their political status, and possibly, of stratifying their subjects. To achieve this end they summoned to their courts brahmans skilled in protocol and ritual" leading to "the whole exceedingly complex ceremonial of Indian court life" (1961:186). This explanatory framework remains intact in Hermann Kulke's recent analysis:

"At a certain stage of this development Brahmins 'came hither' [to mainland Southeast Asia] in order to legitimize the new status and wealth of these chiefs. Obviously there existed a tremendous need of additional legitimation which obviously no other traditional institution was able to provide fully . . . Brahmins appear to have been invited particularly as a sort of 'extra' legitimators of a new and more advanced type of authority which was not sanctioned by the traditional societies of South-East Asia . . . Obviously in both [South India and Southeast Asia] there had existed the same or at least similar socio-political needs for a new type of legitimation" (Kulke 1990:20-12, 30; cf. 22).

There is nothing obvious to me about this statement at all, for there is no reason to accept legitimation theory in the first place, though it is ubiquitous in the literature especially on the question of the transculturation of the Sanskrit cosmopolis.[46]

The fact is that the theoretical basis for this entire explanatory structure has been exploded by contemporary social theory. A serious critique of functionalism is offered perhaps most effectively by the sociologist Anthony Giddens, who argues with far greater subtlety than selective quotation can suggest that "Social systems . . . have no 'needs' . . . Not even the most deeply sedimented institutional features of societies come about, persist, or disappear, because those societies need them to do so. They come about *historically*, as a result of concrete conditions that have in every case to be directly analyzed; the same holds for their persistence or their dissolution" (1981:18). Less ready to hand is a critique of legitimation per se, but Giddens again provides some of the conceptual resources to help in developing one.

> For now, let me just offer the following points: (1) Legitimation theory derives from historical problems of post-Napoleonic constitutional monarchies, from which Weber first introduced it. Transferring it to the domain of Asian premodernity inhibits rather than advances thought. (2) 'Legitimation' implies a model of consensual rational choice that is largely belied by experience. (3) It rests on a conspiracy theory of politics: 'legitimation' suggests a knowledgeability on the part of rulers that is unavailable to the people, who are therefore cultural dopes and dupes, being persuaded to believe in ideas opposed to their interests. (4) Or it depends on an anachronistic model of consensus building that underestimates, potentially, the sanctioning of action by force and violence. (5) (The following points derive from Giddens) What area of 'normative commitment' is being addressed by 'legitimation'? There are large areas of routinized social life that are not 'directly motivated'. (6) Moreover, "those in subordinate positions . . . may frequently be much less closely caught within the embrace of consensual ideologies than many writers . . . assume" (Giddens 1981:67); hence the argument of Abercrombie et al. (1980, 1990) that legitimation (or ideology) is largely a matter of building *ruling class* consensus. Add to all this the recent critique of ideology from the sociologist of peasant Southeast Asia, James Scott. Again, although they are too nuanced to reproduce here, he offers powerful theoretical and historical reasons to conclude that the entire concept of legitimation, hegemony, ideology, in the ways we have always understood them—as discourses that reproduce domination—are "simply irrelevant" for domination in agrarian societies (1990:70-107).

If the theoretical foundations for making sense of the Sanskrit cosmopolis seem to be shaky, can we appeal to any comprehensive historiography of large, translocal cultural transformations in premodernity? Has any historical or sociological structure to the process been suggested that might be usefully subjected to cross-regional analysis, and that—by revealing similar processes with different outcomes—might escape the functionalism and the economism underly-

etc.]). The actual koiné of the region was probably largely old Malay itself (Tarling 1992:1:114).

[46] Functionalist legitimation theory undergirds the entire conceptual framework of the new *Cambridge History of Southeast Asia*: "Indian cultural symbols" allowed Cham leaders to "mobilize local populations"; "aspiring leaders" in central Java "had somehow to acquire a superior legitimacy that would distinguish them from the others and enable them to prevail"; early Khmer leaders "learned to justify their authority by placing it in a universal context of devotion that could fully absorb the religious aspirations and compel the loyalty of their followers" (Tarling 1992:254, 205-6; 157ff.). This is *a fortiori* the case in earlier scholarship (van Naerssen and de Jongh 1977:41 *et passim*).

ing most other explanations? Alas, little work exists on the meaning of cultural transformation in premodernity, even in the case of great imperial or quasi-imperial movements such as Hellenization or Romanization. Let us just consider the latter, a not insignificant process in human history. The historian Ramsay MacMullen is one of the few to consider what the 'choice' to Romanize signified. (He himself points out that "there seems to have been no scholarly attention paid to anything but the symptoms" of Romanization, and virtually nothing on the motives for cultural change [1990:63 and n. 33].) What made Romanization a choice for, say, the Gauls? Rather predictably he concludes it was the desire to possess the prestige of the people who conquered them, and to participate in their political culture (what Tacitus already called their *honoris aemulatio*, 'ambition for promotion').

In some ways the case of Sanskrit is similar, in others very different. A most signal difference was that there was no conqueror's prestige, for there was no conquest. There was similarly no bureaucratic compulsion to Sanskritize, as there often was to Latinize in view of the role of Roman law in the administration of the provinces. Nor was there anything comparable, I think, to the cultural power exerted by the 'center' in a center-periphery world-system relationship. As I have said, there was no concrete center; moreover, the progressive cultural conquest of Sanskrit on its eastern periphery—for obscure reasons the Sanskrit cosmopolis never expanded westwards[47]—was of little interest to the mainland, if we are to judge from the paucity of serious reference in Sanskrit texts to the world to the east. As for interaction with local culture, whereas within the cultural sphere of Latin and Greek, virtually all literization (*Verschriftlichung*) was denied to local languages, in the case of Sanskrit, literization of local languages typically begins simultaneously with the introduction of Sanskrit. But as we have seen, for centuries (half a millennium in the case of Javanese—and Kannada, Telugu, Marathi—and for a full millennium in the case of Khmer), local language *literacy* seems to have been confined to the realm of the communicative and excluded from the domain of the expressive, the

[47] Perhaps for the same reason that the Latinate world never expanded eastwards: that space was occupied by Hellenism, and prestige cultures seem to map out spheres of influence that do not overlap.

'literary', indeed, in an important sense, the political: that was a sphere reserved exclusively for Sanskrit.

(c) In a new historiographical mis-en-scène, therefore, and with no historical sociology and little positive social theory to help us, how are we to make sense of the conditions of possibility of the Sanskrit cosmopolis? Naturally, no monocausal explanation will be adequate to so complex a history. But let me cut into the problem via the political-cultural dimension that has been my focus throughout. In this domain one possible analysis is that Sanskrit became a key feature in a widely shared, highly imitative repertory of culture in what might be called the empire-system of premodernity. (In this I am not too far from Bourdieu's notion of 'field of cultural production' [1994], which is one theoretical aid.) As in the system of nation-states of modernity, where the structure of the system produces a number of cultural effects whose explanation derives from the objective relations constituting the field—the selection and standardization of one dialect to represent the nation, for example—so the empire-system consisted in a relatively stable field of highly imitative behavior. In fact, there seems to be a definite imitation of an imperial form successively reproduced both *horizontally* in time (by peer polity emulation or some such process) and *vertically* (by historical imagination): in Achaeminid (and Sasanian), Hellenic (and Byzantine), Roman (and Carolingian and Ottonian), Guptan, Angkoran, Coḷa embodiments. This imperial culture and self-understanding had a particular package of items. One of these was a language of cosmopolitan stature.

This had to be a language of transethnic attraction; a language capable of making *translocal* claims (not local claims—that was a matter of *deśabhāṣā*); one powerful not so much because of its numinous qualities (something scarcely evident in the epigraphs we actually possess), but because of its aesthetic qualities, its ability somehow to make reality more real. (By this I want to refer both to the Heideggerian *Werkhaftes des Werkes*, its "disclosure of a particular being, disclosing what and how it is" ["eine Eröffnung des Seienden . . . was und wie es ist," 1960:30], as well as to the *constitutive* feature of representation, which *creates* the being *by* disclosing it, as fame is created by being named in poetry.) These aesthetic qualities, moreover, are authenticated by the

language's possessing a tradition of literary texts that embody and realize them.

Furthermore, this had to be a language dignified and stabilized by grammar. Only in such a language could the fame of the ruler be expected to receive permanent, indeed eternal, expression. But this is only a part of the story. The conceptual affinities between the order of Sanskrit poetry, the order of Sanskrit grammar, and the moral, social, and political order are profound indeed. They are embedded, for example, in a millennial-long cultural trope that we can trace from Rudradāman in second century Gujarat, "he who won wide fame by his theoretical and practical mastery and retention of the great knowledges, grammar and the rest" (*śabdārtha-*[. . .]*vidyānāṁ mahatīnāṁ pāraṇadhāraṇa-vijñānaprayogāvāptavipulakīrti-*), to Bhoja in tenth century Dhārā, "he who was wise in all aspects of language use" (*niḥśeṣavāṅmayavid-*), Sañjaya in eighth century Java, "he who understood the finest points of the shastras" (*śāstrasūkṣmārthavedi-*), and Sūryavarman in eleventh-century Angkor, "he whose mind itself seemed truly a mobile body, with the [*Great*] *Commentary* [of Patañjali] and the rest [of the grammatical treatises] for its feet, [the two kinds of] poetry [prose/verse] for its hands, the six systems of philosophy for its senses, *dharmaśāstra* for its head" (bhāṣyādicaraṇā kāvyapāṇiḥ ṣaḍdarśanendriyā | yanmatiḥ dharmaśāstrādimastakā jaṅgamāyate [sic leg.]).

In 800 C.E. in Europe this language was Latin, a basic component in the *imaginaire politique* that sought to recreate the Roman empire at the Carolingian court, where the language was subjected to profound regrammaticalization (as witnesses *De litteris colendibus*); a similar undertaking was made during the 'Ottonian renaissance' two centuries later, where the *translatio imperii* necessitated a revivification of Latin. In both cases regional language text production was discouraged in favor of an imperial-language textuality wholly alien to the everyday lives of the court. Similarly, from ca. 1000 C.E. on in West Asia this language was New Persian, whose earliest great literary production sought to link the new political formations with an imagined Iranian imperial past. It was adopted by ruling elites in Sistān, Ghazni, or Delhi regardless of what they may have spoken in their kitchens. In South and Southeast Asia for a full thousand years before this point, this language was Sanskrit. Sanskrit performed the imperial function of spanning

space and time, and thus enabled one to say things with lasting and pervasive power.

> One intriguing difference between the career of Sanskrit as a cosmopolitan or imperial language and that of Latin is that not only did Sanskrit mediate the literization of local languages wherever it went, and almost immediately, but it rendered them securely authorized languages of record from the very start. There was self-evidently, as I have said, a division of linguistic labor and apparently a division of cultural power, but the fact that local language could be the idiom for the expression of contractual truths, and permanently so (since these contractual arrangements were typically made for "as long as the sun and moon shall shine in the heavens") differentiates Sanskrit from Latin. As M. Irvine points out, "The movement to authorize the vernacular in the age of Alfred and Athelstan had no parallel in the Carolingian world, and French and German became languages of record slowly . . . For Alcuin and his successors, only Latin texts participated in Christian *sapientia*, and only Latin was considered authoritative as a language of record for history and laws" (1994:331-32). In the Latin world the vernacular, unsystematized by grammar, was viewed as unstable and changeable in the way Latin was not, and hence unsuitable for the expression of perduring truth, which a language of record must be capable of expressing. How, from this perspective, the authorization of vernaculars in South and Southeast Asian is to be understood merits serious reflection.

More than this, Sanskrit enabled one to say things—the aesthetic qualities I just referred to—that were not yet sayable in any of the other languages (Tamil importantly excepted). This brings us to consider more deeply the role of the literary in all this. Sanskrit in the inscriptional discourse of the Deccan, in South India, and in Southeast Asia has semantic prerogatives that are unusually clear. Sanskrit alone is permitted to be the language of the figure of sense—of simile, metaphor, above all *śleṣa* or paronomasia; it alone the language of the figure of sound, and the language of metrics (Sanskrit metrics being one of the great treasures and cultural exports of Indian antiquity*). These functions separate the object of Sanskrit discourse from the world of the everyday, not only for the obvious reason that the everyday world does not contain (except randomly or below the threshold of conscious creation) the figures of sense and sound and metric, but because the everyday world—of village boundaries, freehold conditions, tax exemptions, endowment requirements—is not the place for the activities with

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* Editor's note: cf. Terwiel's contribution to the present volume.

which these functions of language are associated: the interpretative, the ambiguous, the polysemic, the imaginative, the persuasive, the captivating. This is not to say that inscriptional discourse does not make deadly serious claims about material and other realities: about territory, succession, royal prerogatives, relations of political dominance.[48] But as its very form shows—which becomes increasingly complex and learned over time (the influence of Bāṇa, for example, grows with almost equal force in the Deccan and Cambodia)—this is not its sole or even main purpose: that purpose is to make the real somehow superreal by poetry. Given its role in enhancing reality, Sanskrit is with increasing regularity both in South India and in Southeast Asia excluded from expressing the everyday, whereas the everyday, which must be univocal, is more and more frequently expressed only in non-Sanskrit. It is here that the analysis of the 'workly' aspect of a text that Heidegger spoke of, along with its 'documentary' opposite that Dominick LaCapra introduces (with useful complication, 1983:30), may be supplemented by materials from outside European modernity. Our public poets did not want these two realms confused, they usually (and as time passed invariably) segregated them by a differentiation of codes, with two different kinds of truth, operative in two different kinds of worlds.

For these reasons we have to begin to realize that these epigraphs are as important for their performative or symbolic meanings, their workly character, as for their informational or discursive or documentary functions. The French who edited the Cambodian inscriptions, like Indologists elsewhere working with such records, never cease to complain of what they saw as the sheer inanity of *praśasti* texts. "Aussi pauvres en faits qu'ils sont riches en propos sans intérêt," "interminable panégyrique," says Finot in discussing the epigraphical remains of Angkor itself (BEFEO 25:289) or the massive public poem on the stele at Mebon (ibid:309). Without interest and interminable to whom? Someone took care beyond imagining to compose the 218 complex punning verses of Mebon or the 198 of PreRup—indeed, if we are to follow Jacques, to compose it according to the dimensions of a stone surface that had already been selected! (in de Casparis 1991:7-8)—engrave it and erect it in a visible spot in a grand temple complex. What else must be present for us to take these poems seriously as cultural statements of significance? And when will we begin to see that among the facts that are important in these texts is their textuality itself; that the creation of the fame and virtue of the king through a celebration of his virtue and fame is what this textuality is meant to do; that the metaphors of the texts are metaphors people lived by, and the education and cultural virtuosity they evince is a whole way of being?[49]

All this, however, prompts an equally important question that has not yet been asked: When and why does it eventually—sooner in Karnataka and Java, later in Cambodia—become necessary to do this celebrating in a local idiom, and thus for the court to demand the production of vernacular as opposed to cosmopolitan literature? Can we make any arguments about a relationship of the development of local literary—more generally, cultural—autarchy and social and political autarchy?

Kannada, by all evidence, develops a literature concurrently with the development of a Kannada-nadu polity, under the Cāḷukyas of Bādāmi and more significantly under their successor, the Rāṣṭrakūṭas. It is no coincidence, but an indication of a new relationship of vernacular poetry and polity, that the first major discursive work on old Kannada literature, the Kavirājamārgam, which strives consciously to *territorialize* this literature (1.36ff.), emerges from within the center of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa court in the mid-ninth century; the important literature at north Karnataka courts for the next three centuries will be Kannada. Tamil literature experiences a new surge of creativity, with new kinds of literary genres (often far more Sanskritized than previously) during the consolidation of the later Coḷa domain under Rājarāja (985-1014) and his immediate successors; crucial to place in this context, I think, is Kamban's *Rāmāvatāram*. Much the same thing occurs among the Veṅgi Cāḷukyas in the twelfth century, when a new brahmanized form of Telugu poetry, perfected by Nannaya, comes into existence. Something of the same argument could be made for Java. Although the his-

[48] E.g., Vickery 1985 (discussed above, pp. 220), and, for a small but telling instance from the medieval Deccan—the Kalyāni Cāḷukyas read the Aihoḷe inscription to construct themselves a past—Pollock 1996.

[49] "The veneer of Indian literary allusions in their inscriptions is no more than a metaphorizing of their situations and heroes and a comment on the quality of their scribes' education," says Wolters in a well-known article on Khmer 'Hinduism' (Wolters 1979:427-42, esp. 440). Since when are metaphors, or the education of the ruling elites, devoid of sociocultural significance?

torical record and the dating of texts are problematic, there appears to be some concomitance between the development of old Javanese literature and the growth of a new (mixed agricultural/maritime) regional polity in eastern Java—Kaḍiri, Singhasari, Majapahit—from the 10th century on (similarly, in the architectural idiom, the cosmic cosmopolitanism of Borobudur or Prambanam gives way to a new 'autochthonism'). [50] And one might wish to make a similar case for the emergence of a literized regional culture happening at around the same time—with Alfred, 871-99 C.E.—a world away in England. Somewhere in all this complicated material, among these radical shifts in cultural politics, lies the basis for an important new theorization of a politics of vernacular culture in the polities of premodernity. To work towards this theorization, however, will mean rethinking the subalternity of vernacularization, on the one hand, and of the problem of ideology on the other. A brief word on both.

A dominant assumption in both Western and South Asian scholarship holds that vernacular culture somehow necessarily expresses subaltern consciousness. Gramsci, for example, believed that "the vernaculars are written down when the people regain importance" (Gramsci 1991:168). This is, unfortunately, untrue for both Europe itself and South Asia. I have already alluded to the example of Alfred's vernacular politics (directly and consciously juxtaposed to the old imperial model of Charlemagne, Irvine 1994:417). As for South Asia, it is largely an illusion, albeit one widely shared, that the literization—for some, indeed, the *invention*—of regional languages was due to subaltern *bhakta*s. This is false not only for South India (in Karnataka, for example, old Kannada literature is courtly, suffused with Sanskrit, and unintelligible to those ignorant of Sanskrit); but also in the north, where some of the earliest regional-language texts are composed by courtly Muslims (e.g., the verses of Mas'ud Sa'd Salman, ca. 1100, of the Yamini Kingdom of Lahore). The relationships between language, literature, and social power in South Asia are not going to be unpacked

[50] Cf. Zoetmulder 1974:26; van Naerssen and de Jongh 1977:60ff.: "Contrary to the abundance of manuscripts originating from East Java, very few—if any—could be attributed to the pre-*pralaya* period [before Airlangga]" in Central Java. They go on to caution against believing that "literature was absent in the early Central Javanese period," but the evidence they cite applies to *Sanskrit* literature.

by any simple formula transferred from Europe, especially one that is itself shaky.

This pertains all the more so to the even murkier question of 'ideology' in the strong sense (of Bourdieu, Giddens, and others), as systematically distorted communication. The notion that the Sanskrit poems of polity were produced to secure a consensus of false necessity in a contingent set of power relations—in addition to or instead of relying on techniques of coercion—is, as I have tried to suggest, a mere assumption, and an exogenous, anachronistic, unfounded one at that; I have already noted the view that even in the domain of Western capitalism, where the concept is native, this assessment of ideology has been seriously challenged (Abercrombie et al. 1980, 1990; their view that 'ideology' serves to produce coherence in the *dominant* class itself may in fact be pertinent to our materials, too). We cannot simply read off automatically from the choice to express political will in Sanskrit any particular social consequences (e.g., hierarchization, hegemony; the production of false belief), let alone any singular material cause ('theocratic hydraulic'/agrarian mode of production). To put this more generally: We may readily accept that "*linguistic relations are always relations of symbolic power* through which relations of force between the speakers and their respective groups are actualized in a transfigured form" (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992:142); but what we cannot assume is the nature, directionality, effect, and negativity of this 'power'. It needs to be worked out through historical analysis of concrete cases.

Even a simpler view of ideology as cultural domination cannot pass unexamined. The argument can be made that cultural colonization and its response, indigenism, are phenomena of modern imperialism not easily retrofitted onto the premodern world; from this perspective, the appropriation of Sanskrit by elites in southern India and Southeast Asia might more easily be understood as autonomous cultural choice. Just as we realize the nonsense of speaking of superior or inferior cultures, or of the 'gift of civilization' [51]—true ideological constructions of progressivist modernity—so we cannot easily make a moral adjudication of cultural domination. We cannot know with any sense of certitude

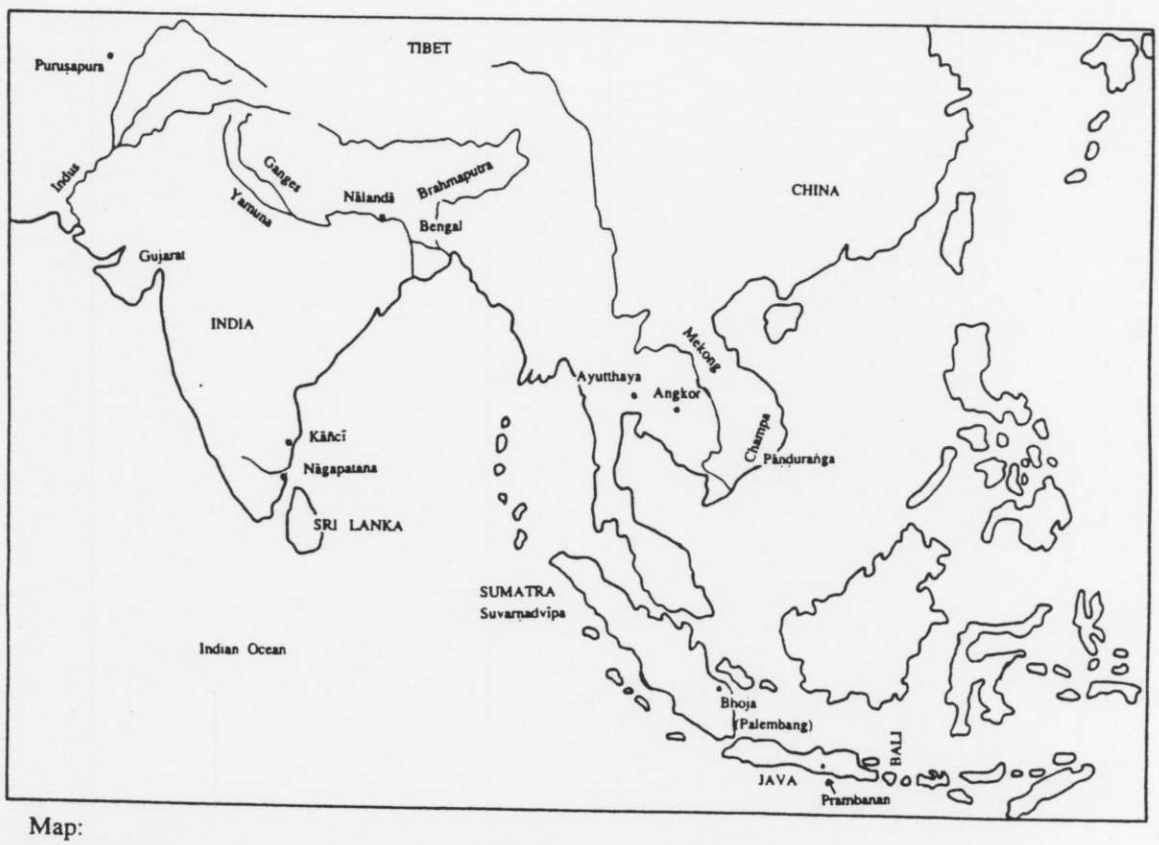
[51] The idea underwrites the work of Coedès 1968 (cf. also Wheatley, Sanskrit represents "a recognizably superior cultural pattern" 1961:188; note also Brunt 1990:268 for Latin in western Europe).

whether the Sanskrit transculturation of Indian and Southeast Asian elites was a 'bad' thing or not (at least not with the certitude of MacMullen, who refers to the Romanization of Gallic elites as "a sort of decapitation of the conquered culture," 1990:62). To be sure, if transculturation processes empowered people to speak in some ways, it disabled them from speaking in others, and a growing sense of that disability may be one condition of re-vernacularization. But there lurks in this assessment an antihistorical and essentialized view of 'culture' as the homogenous and monopolized capital of a singular ethnos. The fact is, however, that the cultural materials being transferred are *already hybrid themselves*; and like the transmitter the receiver culture too is something always in process and not a thing with an essence. 'Transculturation', accordingly, turns out to be something of a misnomer, since it is the real and permanent condition of all cultural life, with 'the vernacular' and vernacularization themselves being, not something 'authentic' but just another unstable stage in a sequence of changes. The Sanskrit poetry and poetic sciences transferred to Southeast Asia were themselves created by 'transcultured' poets like the Daṇḍin of Tamil Nadu or Bhāravi (of Kannada Nadu?), just as the Roman literary culture transferred to Gallic elites was in fact created by non-Romans: the Greek Andronicus and the Oscans Naevius and Ennius. Indeed, as the Sanskrit cosmopolis shows so strikingly, there exist no cultural agents who are not always-already transcultured.

A useful corrective to the shortcomings of theorizing premodern cultural flows might be found in recent thinking about the cultural processes of the 'global ecumene' of modernity. The anthropologist Ulf Hannerz, for example, usefully details the different interpretations of cultural change here, where the influence of the center ('radical diffusionism') has been variously understood to bring about homogenization (the cocacolonization of the world) or its opposite, a new and anxious celebration, or even creation, of the local. He rightly points out that translocal processes can add new materials for transformation by local cultures, and that there exists a kind of dialectic between micro and macro processes (Hannerz 1989).

But Hannerz's view requires the expansion provided by deep historicization. For such an undertaking, the Sanskrit cosmopolis is a crucial case, since it displays to us the vast historical processes wherein the

real condition of culture becomes visible, as the constant appropriation and localization of ever new translocal flows. Here, too, moreover, we can glimpse a time before—and perhaps the beginnings of the moment when—various nationalisms equated language community and political community, and modernity created the true *ideological* representations of culture: the illusory and dangerous notions of the authentic, the autochthonous, the indigenous, the native.



Map:

The 'Sanskrit Cosmopolis' and Centres of Sanskrit learning (ca. 7th-10th C.E.),

containing some of the geographical names mentioned in the papers of this volume. Some modern names have been added. The editor is grateful to Dr. M.J. Klokke for assistance and advise in the preparation of this simplified map.